



Afrobarometer Paper No.2

**ATTITUDES TO DEMOCRACY
AND MARKETS IN GHANA**

by Michael Bratton,
Peter Lewis and E. Gyimah-Boadi

**A comparative series of national public
attitude surveys on democracy, markets
and civil society in Africa.**



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POLITICAL REFORM IN AFRICA

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The Afrobarometer Series, launched in October 1999, reports the results of national sample surveys on the attitudes of citizens in selected African countries towards democracy, markets and other aspects of development. The Afrobarometer is a joint enterprise of Michigan State University (MSU), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD, Ghana). Afrobarometer papers are simultaneously co-published by these partner institutions. The objective of the Afrobarometer is to collect, analyze and disseminate cross-national, time-series attitudinal data for up to a dozen new democracies on the African continent.

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SUMMARY

A national sample survey on “Attitudes to Democracy and Markets” was conducted in Ghana in July 1999.

Beginning with political orientations, the survey showed that citizens:

- ? **Are interested in politics and governmental affairs.** Most people expressed an interest in politics (71.7 percent) and said that they discussed politics with others (67.6 percent).
- ? **Get political information from the radio.** Whereas 41.4 percent listen to radio news bulletins every day, only 12.9 percent read newspapers daily.
- ? **Know their leaders.** Most people could name their Member of Parliament (55.0 percent) and the national Vice-President (60.4 percent).
- ? **Are quite trustful of government institutions.** The proportion of the population that trusted four key government institutions was higher in Ghana (61.2 percent) than in other African countries.
- ? **Are nonetheless confused about what democratic institutions do.** Almost half thought that the army (42.6 percent) and political parties (45.6 percent) are the “same thing as government”.

As for political participation, survey respondents:

- ? **Are engaged with civil society.** Some 76.9 percent reported attending religious services at least once a week and 45.2 percent reported being a member of some other kind of voluntary association.
- ? **Claim to participate in electoral politics at high rates.** Fully 93.6 percent said they were registered as voters and 88.6 reported voting in the 1996 general elections.
- ? **Are far less politically active between elections.** Few citizens had ever contacted a local Assemblyman (26.8 percent) or Member of Parliament (12.1 percent).
- ? **Perceive a “representation gap”.** Fewer than half of all constituents were satisfied with their M.P.’s performance (46.1 percent).

As far as political reform is concerned, Ghanaians:

- ? **See democracy in liberal terms.** The most common popular definitions include civil liberties (27.8 percent), self-government (21.6 percent) and voting rights (9.3 percent).



- ? **Strongly support democracy.** A clear majority (76.5 percent) thought that “democracy is preferable to any other form of government”.
- ? **Retain little nostalgia for authoritarian regimes.** For example, only 10.5 percent of Ghanaians agreed that “the army should come back in to govern the country”.
- ? **Are less than fully satisfied with democracy in practice.** Just 54.4 percent said that they were pleased with the way that democracy actually works in Ghana.
- ? **Think that democracy has not yet delivered economic benefits.** Whereas 46.6 percent said that living standards had worsened since the democratic transition, only 35.9 percent saw improvement.
- ? **Nonetheless display political patience.** Almost three-quarters (74.0 percent) agreed that it will take many years for an elected government to deal with inherited problems.

Turning to economic conditions, the survey found that respondents:

- ? **“Get by” economically.** Most Ghanaians (59.3 percent) apparently “break even” on household income and expenditures; only 16.8 percent are able to save money, whereas 24.0 percent must dip into savings or borrow.
- ? **Experience periods of economic need.** Many householders reported at least occasional shortages of food (32.7 percent), water (39.2 percent), education (40.7 percent), and health care (46.6 percent).
- ? **Prefer private solutions when basic commodities are in short supply.** In obtaining essentials, Ghanaians said that they turn first to kin and then to the market, and only rarely to community groups or government.

In terms of basic economic orientations, Ghanaians:

- ? **Are dissatisfied with the state of the national economy.** 66.0 percent felt this way in July 1999, with 41.3 being very dissatisfied.
- ? **Are also dissatisfied with their personal economic well-being.** 68.3 percent felt this way, with 41.9 percent being very dissatisfied.
- ? **Are optimistic about their own economic prospects.** More than half of all respondents (52.2 percent) said they expect to be more satisfied in a year, compared with only 16.7 percent who expected to be less satisfied.
- ? **Hold domestic political leaders responsible for economic conditions.** Three out of five

persons (60.9 percent) named the current (NDC) government, versus a mere 3.4 percent who cited the IMF or World Bank.

? **Are skeptical about the government's capacity to deliver on its promises.** 46.0 percent said they believed it would “never” do so.

Are Ghanaians therefore attached to market values? According to the survey, they:

? **Believe in individual responsibility.** More than half (55.5 percent) agreed that “people should look after themselves and be responsible for their own success in life”.

? **Display entrepreneurship,** with 86.4 percent agreeing that individuals should pursue good business ideas, even if this requires investing savings or taking out a loan.

? **Wish to keep a role for government in some markets.** These include the markets for land (60.8 percent), agricultural credit (76.8 percent) and cocoa marketing (63.7 percent).

More specifically, popular attitudes to the government's reform program include:

? **Low name-recognition for the Economic Recovery Program.** Only 41.0 percent of Ghanaians had heard of the ERP, which has guided national economic strategy since 1983.

? **General dissatisfaction with the ERP.** Just over half of all Ghanaians (53.3 percent) took this position; 34.2 percent were satisfied and 12.5 percent were neutral.

? **Acceptance of market pricing.** This applies to consumer goods (provided commodities are readily available) and to fees for education (as long as the quality of schooling improves).

? **Retention of public employment.** By clear majorities, Ghanaians rejected cut-backs in government jobs through privatization and civil service retrenchment.

? **A serious case of “adjustment fatigue”.** In contrast to their political patience, most Ghanaians (62.5 percent of respondents) wanted an immediate change in economic policies, with 40.0 percent expressing a strong opinion on this matter.

Finally, with regard to the rule of law, survey respondents:

? **See widespread official corruption.** An overwhelming 84.9 percent of Ghanaians thought that bribery was common among public officials, though only 30.4 percent reported ever having been asked for a bribe (most commonly by the police).



? **Think fellow citizens do not obey the law.** Responses ranged according to the violation, from public littering at the high end to income tax evasion at the low end.

? **Feel safer from crime since the advent of democracy.** In marked contrast to citizens of other new democracies, only about one-third of Ghanaians (35.5 percent) felt less safe.

Overall, Ghanaians are:

? **Ambivalent about the performance of the NDC government.** One third thought the government had done a bad job (30.0 percent), one third thought they had done a good job (36.0 percent), and one third saw the government's record as "fair" (33.9 percent).

To summarize:

? **More Ghanaians support democracy** than are **satisfied** with it.

? Ghanaians support **some aspects** of the government's **economic reform** program but **not others**.

? **More Ghanaians are satisfied with democracy** than are **satisfied with the ERP**.

? Those who **support political reform** are also **likely to support economic reform**.

For fuller description and various interpretations of these results, plus breakdowns of opinion by different social groups, see the main body of this paper.

BACKGROUND

Introduction

More than a dozen African countries, including Ghana, made a transition to democracy in the early 1990s by introducing multiparty elections. The consolidation of these fragile new regimes, however, involves much more than the formality of regular free and fair elections. Democracy will only be secure when all major actors come to the conclusion that political procedures based on human rights, equal participation and open competition are “the only game in town”. In short, the consolidation of democracy requires a supportive political culture.

Again like other African countries, Ghana is attempting a “dual transition”, not only to democracy but also to a market-based economy. This transition is based on the assumption that the best chance for economic growth lies in freeing up the entrepreneurial talents of African citizens. Yet the process of reforming state-run economies is incomplete in much of Africa and the attitudes of citizens towards market values and economic reforms are not well known. How are Africans oriented toward the market? Which specific reform measures do different groups accept or reject? And do supporters of economic reform also support democracy?

To answer these questions – and to assess whether democracy and markets are taking root in Africa – it is necessary to conduct applied survey research on popular attitudes, values, and behavior. We need to know “what works?”, “what doesn’t?” and “why?” in the implementation of political and economic reforms.

This document reports the results of a national sample survey on “Attitudes to Democracy and Markets” conducted in Ghana in July 1999. The survey was implemented by researchers from Michigan State University (MSU) and the American University (AU) in collaboration with Center for Democracy and Development (CDD), a non-governmental research institute based in Accra. The report provides basic descriptive statistics on the structure of public opinion in Ghana, together with some preliminary analysis and interpretation.²

Before presenting the results of the study, this introductory section traces the evolution of political and economic reforms in Ghana, summarizes the design of the survey, and discusses the social background of the survey respondents.

Political and Economic Reforms in Ghana

Political Reform. Democracy, prosperity and self-rule animated Ghana’s struggle for independence from colonial rule. “Free forever”, proclaimed Kwame Nkrumah, as he announced Ghana’s Independence on March 6, 1957. However, the vision of a democratic and an economically developed nation was to prove elusive. Beginning life with a liberal democratic constitution and all its trappings (such as an independent judiciary, opposition parties, and guarantees of civil liberties), Ghana had become a quasi-dictatorship by the mid 1960s. By the time the First Republic fell in the military coup of 1966, the Constitution of 1957 had long been scrapped, civil liberties had been curtailed, the ruling Convention People’s Party (C.P.P.) was declared the sole legal party, and Nkrumah installed himself as lifelong

leader.

Subsequent attempts at democratization fared no better. The Constitution of 1969 and the Second Republic (under Prime Minister Kofi Busia and the Progress Party government) were overthrown in another military coup on January 13, 1972. With some credence, the coup plotters cited violations of the democratic spirit by the duly elected government as one of the reasons for their action.

From 1972 to 1979, Ghana was ruled by a succession of senior military officers. In June 1979, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, headed by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings imposed a new military regime. The Rawlings government allowed the process of constitutional restoration already underway to continue, permitting multi-party elections and handing over the reins of government to Hilla Limann and his People's National Party on September 24, 1979. With the inauguration of the Third Republic, Ghana began yet another attempt to operate a liberal democratic constitution. In just a little over two years, the Third Republic, the 1979 Constitution, and the Limann government were all overthrown in a fourth coup d'état, this one also by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, on December 31, 1981.

For the next eleven years, Ghana was ruled as a quasi-military dictatorship under Rawlings's Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC).

Economic reform. Attempts at reform have also been an important theme in post-colonial Ghana's economic history. The Ghanaian economy, which was modestly prosperous by the standards of non-industrial countries of the day - with robust exports of gold, cocoa and timber, accumulated foreign exchange reserves of over \$500m. and a per capita income of about \$300 a year - had fallen into decay by the time Nkrumah's government was overthrown in 1966.

The economic regime prevailing in Ghana at the time of independence allowed room for market forces. But from the early 1960s, the country began to move steadily away from economic liberalism to statism. By the time the structural adjustment program was initiated by the Rawlings-PNDC government in 1983, the economy bore all the marks of a command system and its corresponding distortions.

Notwithstanding considerable internal opposition, the quasi-military PNDC persisted with neo-liberal economic reforms. The reforms brought significant improvements in the macro-economic situation. They helped to bring about a reversal of economic decline, an abatement of Ghana's chronic fiscal crisis, which in turn made possible a partial but significant rehabilitation of long-decaying social and economic infrastructure, and a restoration of the organizational capacity of the state. However, the PNDC's economic recovery program had severe limitations. It hardly reduced structural dependency. External debt grew. Infrastructural rehabilitation and restoration of organizational capacity of the state remained inadequate. Furthermore, economic growth and other improvements associated with the reforms did not appear to translate into direct benefits to the public. Unemployment was high and social wages remained very low. By 1992, Ghana could be said to be suffering from "adjustment fatigue".

The Fourth Republic. On January 7, 1993, Ghana returned to civilian rule under the 1992 Constitution (which is as liberal as those of 1957, 1969 and 1979) and an elected government led by Jerry Rawlings and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The transition elections of 1992, though disputed, ushered in a significant degree of political liberalization, allowing Ghanaians to enjoy a much wider range of rights and liberties, and giving the privately owned media scope to emerge. Constitutional rule also opened a larger political space for civil society in Ghana. Civic associations and non-governmental associations (NGOs) proliferated, with many of them throwing themselves into civic and political activism.

To be sure, the process of transition to democratic rule was severely flawed, with the opposition parties disputing the results of the presidential elections of November 1992, leading to the boycott of the parliamentary elections by the same parties, and a *de facto* one-party Parliament ensuing. But with the relatively successful presidential and parliamentary elections of December 1996, the inauguration of the second administration of the Fourth Republic, and a new Parliament in which opposition parties had a stronger presence, Ghanaian democratization appeared to be back on track.

Economic reform presents an equally mixed picture. On the one hand, the Ghanaian economy appeared to falter under constitutional rule. Paralyzing strikes and violent protests have compelled the government to slow the pace of reform measures such as public sector job retrenchments and removal of subsidies.

Economic growth has decelerated somewhat, macro-economic imbalances have re-emerged, and the enviable record of fiscal prudence compiled since the 1980s appear to have been thrown into jeopardy, because of election-related overspending among other reasons.

On the other hand, political elites have arrived at a modest consensus on the broad outlines of economic policy. The main opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) hews closely to the NDC's neo-liberal line enshrined in the government's Vision 2020 economic policy document. On the whole, efforts to foster an environment conducive to economic growth and private sector-development have borne some fruits, and constitutional provisions protecting property are generally respected.

The Objectives and Design of the Survey

The purpose of the present study is to find out what ordinary Ghanaians think about these recent political and economic developments. It explores public attitudes at the individual, "micro" level toward political and economic changes at the national, "macro" level. As a guiding theme, we asked : "do Ghanaians support democracy and markets?".

The study was designed as a national sample survey, meaning that we posed the same schedule of questions to a small sub-set of the population who were selected to represent the adult population of Ghana as a whole.

The research instrument was a questionnaire containing 90 items (mostly closed-ended and some with multiple parts) that addressed four main areas of interest. First, a section of the questionnaire on the social background of the respondent asked conventional questions about gender, age, residential location,



education and income. A second section on political attitudes and behaviors probed how Ghanaians regarded, and interacted with, their political leaders, the institutions of government, the organs of civil society, and the country's new regime of democracy. A third section asked about the economic status of the respondent and whether he or she thought and acted like an entrepreneur. It also examined the respondent's views with regard to market-oriented policy reforms and the performance of the government at economic management. Finally, we investigated the rule of law by asking about citizen attitudes to crime and corruption.

The questionnaire replicated several items that had been asked in previous surveys in Ghana and in selected studies in other countries in Africa and abroad. Standard items were included for purposes of comparison. We wanted to assess whether change was occurring within Ghana over time and to locate Ghanaian attitudes in relation to those of citizens elsewhere in the world. Indeed, the contents of the questionnaire were intentionally modeled on a series of "Afrobarometer" surveys now underway or planned in at least nine African countries.³

To adapt the questionnaire to local conditions, we pre-tested all items in trial interviews in both rural and urban areas of Ghana and translated the English version into five local languages: Akan, Ewe, Ga, Dagbani and Hausa. All interviews were administered in the language of the respondent's choice.

The target population for the survey was citizens of Ghana, namely persons who were 18 years old or older on the day of the survey in July 1999 and therefore eligible to vote. To draw a representative cross-section of the voting age population, we designed a random sample using a multi-stage, stratified, area cluster approach. The objective of the sample was to give every eligible adult in the country an equal chance of being chosen for an interview. To do this, we made sure that random procedures were used at every stage of the sample, including the selection of enumeration areas, households and respondents.

For a precise account of the sampling methodology, see Appendix 1.

A total of 2005 persons were interviewed. A random sample of this size allows a confidence level of 95 percent and a confidence interval of plus or minus 2.5 percent. In other words, we are sure that, 19 times out of 20, the figures reported from the sample differ by no more than 2.5 percentage points in either direction from the results that would have been obtained had we interviewed every adult Ghanaian.

The survey was conducted in all ten administrative regions of the country, with the number of interviews in each region being proportional to the region's population size (see Appendix 1). Eight field teams, composed of one supervisor and up to seven enumerators, were trained in a two-day intensive workshop at CDD and deployed to the field for up to fourteen days starting on July 5, 1999. Data was entered at CDD and analysed at AU and MSU.

The Social Characteristics of the Sample

The survey sample was divided roughly evenly between men and women: 52.7 percent were male and 47.2 percent were female.⁴ Because some male heads of household insisted on speaking on behalf of their families, we were not able to eliminate a slight bias towards males. But our sample came closer to the country's true gender distribution as estimated by the World Bank -- 49 percent male and 51 percent female -- than any previous political attitude survey conducted in Ghana. And, for all the descriptive statistics reported below, we weighted the results to remove any gender bias.

The median age of survey respondents was 34 years in a range from 18 years (45 respondents) to 98 years (one person, a woman in Kumasi-Asawasi). In the analysis that follows we sometimes refer to "younger people" (meaning individuals age 18-26, who comprised 26.9 percent of the sample) or "older people" (defined as age 45 or more, constituting 27.0 percent). Those in the middle (individuals age 27-44) made up the largest age cohort (46.1 percent).

Excluding children, the median size of the respondents' households was 4 persons, commonly comprised of two parents and a couple of adult offspring still living at home. Most of the households sampled (84.7 percent) had between two to six adults living there at the time of the survey. There were few single-member households (3.3 percent, usually unmarried or widowed individuals) or households with seven or more adults in residence (11.9 percent, where a polygamous male had multiple wives or where clans of siblings or cousins cohabited). Smaller households were more common in the urban Greater Accra region and larger households were more common among the Islamic populations of the northern regions.⁵

Reflecting the population distribution in Ghana, we interviewed more rural than urban respondents. Rural residents comprised 53.8 percent of the total sample, while urban residents made up the remaining 46.2 percent. Rather than relying on the classification of urban and rural areas by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), which is based on data from the 1984 census, we asked our survey supervisors to classify respondents who lived in population centers of 5000 persons or more as "urban" and the remainder as "rural". In several cases, our survey supervisors classified enumeration areas as "urban" in 1999 that GSS had dubbed "rural" in 1984. We feel confident that our classification captures more accurately the recent growth of urban areas within Ghana, particularly towns in rural areas with populations over 5000 persons.

When asked which Ghanaian language they spoke most often, the respondents mentioned fully 42 different languages or dialects. But a few languages predominated: over half of the sample (59.8 percent) named Akan as their primary tongue, followed by Ewe (11.5 percent) and Ga (5.9 percent). The remaining 38 languages (plus "other") together comprised the balance of responses (22.8 percent), but no single language received more than 2.5 percent of the total. Almost two out of three respondents (64.1 percent) said that they understood spoken English, with a slightly smaller percentage (58.8 percent) claiming that they could read and write in this official language.

On average, respondents had received 8.3 years of formal education. The median educational record, which applied to about one-quarter of persons interviewed (23.6 percent), was 10 years or, in other words, two years of post-primary schooling. The next most common response was zero years of formal

education, with 22.8 percent reporting that they had never attended school. Education was clearly a function of age, with later generations benefitting from expanded educational opportunities; for example, 36.6 percent of younger people had more than ten years of schooling compared to just 23.5 percent of older people.⁶ Education was also a function of gender: of those reporting zero years of formal education, 68.1 percent were women, while women made up only 38.2 percent of those with more than ten years of education.⁷

Almost one third of the sample described themselves as farmers (32.8 percent). Among those with work, other frequently cited occupations were informal marketeer (12.0 percent), artisan (8.2 percent) and student (5.6 percent). Almost one in ten persons (9.5 percent) said they were “unemployed”.

To obtain a rough estimate of household income, the survey asked how much money the respondent and his or her spouse together earned in a month. The responses ranged from zero to over one million cedis (\$400). Those who said they had no earnings (15.7 percent) were either dependent on others (like students supported by their families) or effectively outside the cash economy (like self-provisioning farmers). But fully three quarters of the responses (74.8 percent) fell within the range of 1,000 to 300,000 cedis (\$4 to \$120) per month, with a median income for all respondents somewhere between 50,000 and 100,000 cedis (\$20 to \$40). As elsewhere in the world, education was an excellent predictor of income.⁸ In Ghana, more than half of the people with more than ten years of schooling made over 300,000 cedis per month (\$120), whereas fewer than 10 percent of the people without education were able to do so.



PART ONE: POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

Orientation to Politics

A conventional starting point for gauging the political culture of any country is to ask whether citizens are interested in politics. The survey revealed that Ghanaians are attentive to the political world around them. A large majority of respondents (71.7 percent) expressed an interest in political and governmental affairs. This level of interest compares favorably with the 67.7 percent who answered positively to the same question in Zambia in 1996.⁹ As in other countries, a citizen's interest in politics in Ghana is closely related to his or her involvement in political discussions. In Ghana, 67.6 percent said that they sometimes or often discuss politics and government with other people.¹⁰

Nevertheless, a couple of concerns arise about basic political orientations. To begin with, the proportion of people that is very interested in politics (24.9 percent) is far lower than the proportion who admit to being only somewhat interested (46.8 percent).¹¹ Some respondents seemed resistant to reveal a strong interest in politics, which we attribute to the residual effects of the culture of silence that prevailed during the former military regime. Ghanaians apparently do not yet feel entirely comfortable expressing their political attitudes openly, perhaps for fear of possible repercussions. The enumerators who conducted the surveys reported that more than a few respondents were suspicious of the survey motivations and reluctant to answer politically-oriented questions.

Moreover, a good proportion of persons remained politically apathetic: 28.3 percent said that they were not interested in politics or government at all. Political apathy predictably was higher among poor and less educated people but, against our expectations, rural folk were slightly more likely to say they were interested in politics than their urban counterparts.¹² The engagement in local and national affairs of citizens who are politically marginal remains a challenge for the consolidation of democracy in Ghana.

Even if people are interested in politics, they may lack the self-confidence to become active citizens. The survey asked several questions aimed at discovering whether Ghanaians felt competent to engage in public life. Slightly more than half of all respondents (58.1 percent) agreed that, in discussions about politics with friends and neighbors, they were usually able to influence the opinions of others. The remainder felt that friends and neighbors usually did not listen to them (41.9 percent). Although a majority thus felt some sense of political efficacy in relation to community affairs, Ghanaians felt much less adequate with regard to matters of national government. Most people (63.4 percent) agreed that the government operates in such a complicated way that they cannot really understand what is going on. As in an earlier survey conducted by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in 1995, only about one-third (36.6 percent) were confident that they could usually comprehend the way that government works.¹³

Concerning the ability of citizens to make political representatives listen to their problems, Ghanaians were evenly split. One half (49.3 percent) agreed that the community was able to gain the



attention of political representatives and the other half (50.7 percent) asserted that they could not. Almost one third of the respondents (29.1 percent) strongly agreed that they could not get their leaders' attention. Despite low estimates of government responsiveness, Ghanaians nonetheless seemed to feel more politically efficacious than Zambians, only 34.3 percent of whom felt that they could make representatives listen.

Notwithstanding some doubts about citizen competence between elections, Ghanaians were convinced that, as voters, they could exercise political influence. About two out of three respondents agreed that they could use their political power at the polls to choose leaders who would help them to improve their lives. Almost half (49.1 percent) strongly agreed with this statement. Only a third of the respondents (32.2 percent) felt that no matter who they voted for, things would not get better in the future. As might be expected, those most interested in politics felt that voting mattered, whereas cynical attitudes about the impact of elections were more widespread among the politically apathetic.¹⁴

We also noticed a pattern of gender difference in all the basic predispositions to politics. On all relevant survey items, men exhibited stronger interest and competence in politics than women. For example, more men (32.2 percent) than women (17.8 percent) said that they were very interested in politics; conversely more women (33.5 percent) than men (23.0 percent) evinced political apathy (by saying they were not interested). Regarding political debate, 29.3 percent of male respondents reported often discussing politics, while only 14.5 percent of women did so. Almost half of the women (49.2 percent compared to 34.4 percent of men) thought that people did not listen to their political views. And fewer women than men said that they found government procedures understandable and that elections would make life better.¹⁵

Thus, at both community and national levels, women felt less empowered than men. Moreover, we found no evidence that democratization has challenged, much less reversed, the traditional syndrome of women's subordination.

Political Knowledge

To make a meaningful contribution to democracy, citizens must be well-informed about the political system of which they are a part. The survey posed questions to probe the knowledge of Ghanaians about elected leaders and political institutions.

To an encouraging degree, Ghanaians know their leaders. More than half of the persons surveyed could name the Assemblyman or Assemblywoman (58.7 percent) and the Member of Parliament (MP) (55.0 percent) for their area. This level of political knowledge about the identity of elected representatives would be impressive even in an established democracy. And it arises, surprisingly, in a context where most people, especially women, think that their representatives are unresponsive. Nor is knowledge of leaders an aberration since Ghanaian levels approach those of Zambia (65.1 percent and 61.7 percent respectively in 1996, immediately after a general election). It seems that, in face-to-face political cultures in Africa, citizens have intimate knowledge of which



individuals wield power, perhaps even to the point of blurring the distinction between political offices and the identities of their occupants.

Notably, political knowledge declines with distance from the locality. Ghanaians know their MPs less well than their local government representatives, and they are often unsure about the identities of Cabinet Ministers. Just 32.1 percent could correctly name the Minister of Finance, even though his policy decisions have weighty consequence for their livelihoods. In an exception to this trend, however, almost twice as many respondents (60.4 percent) could correctly name the country's Vice-President. In this case, knowledge of John Atta-Mills's name reflects the capacity of the ruling National Democratic Congress to use official media outlets to project information across the country.

But does political knowledge extend to institutions? A key difference between democracy and other regime types is the legal separation of powers among key political institutions. As a means of concentrating power, autocratic regimes commonly fuse the executive branch of government with other dominant political institutions. The survey therefore asked whether Ghanaians saw a difference between the "government" on the one hand and chiefs, the army, and political parties respectively, or whether these were "the same thing". Most Ghanaians perceived a clear difference between chieftaincy and government (75.9 percent), reflecting the reduction of chiefly powers in the contemporary era. But Ghanaians were somewhat less sure that the army (57.4 percent) and political parties (54.4 percent) were institutions distinct from "government". And they were in two minds about the distinction between central and local governments, with only 49.5 percent regarding these as discrete institutional arenas.

We interpret these findings to mean that knowledge of the separate and specialized roles of political institutions in a democracy is still limited in Ghana. Given the country's gradual and unfinished transition from military leadership by 1999, many people still wonder whether the army has removed itself entirely from politics. And given the dominant role of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the party system, others regard the ruling party as enjoying privileged access to governmental decisions and resources. Finally, because district assemblies depend heavily on budgetary flows from central government and because one third of district assembly representatives are appointed by the central government, Ghanaians have yet to regard local government as an autonomous arena in which citizens can organize to achieve their own objectives.

How was political knowledge distributed across the population? Women were less knowledgeable than men, especially about the identities of national political leaders: for example, only 20.2 percent knew the Minister of Finance (versus 44.4 percent for men). This finding makes one wonder whether persons with key responsibilities for household welfare are aware of economic reform issues, a question to be explored later in this report. And people with less education were more prone to regard dominant political institutions as "the same" as government: for example, clear majorities of people with no education could not distinguish government from the army (54.7 percent) and political parties (57.8 percent), suggesting that this part of the citizenry is not well informed about the roles of new democratic institutions.



Political knowledge is also shaped by citizens' access to the mass media. Unlike other African countries with less widespread electricity services, Ghanaians rely quite heavily on television for political information, with 43.1 percent of all households (and 65.0 percent of urban households) owning a TV set. Like other Africans, however, most Ghanaians get their political information from the radio, with fully 69.4 percent saying they listen to a broadcast news bulletin at least once a week and 41.4 percent claiming to listen every day.

Newspaper readership is far lower, especially in rural areas, where circulation is limited and among the urban poor, who cannot afford to buy daily papers. In addition, newspaper reading requires English-language literacy, while many radio stations broadcast at least some of the time in local languages. Over half of the respondents reported that they never read a newspaper (57.9 percent), while only 12.9 percent asserted daily readership. The most popular title was the *Daily Graphic* (read by 39.1 percent of all respondents) followed by the *Ghanaian Times* (16.3 percent), both state-owned publications. And, in a context where more than half the population do not read newspapers but rely on electronic media, government influence over radio and television would seem to offer considerable advantages to political incumbents.

As expected, persons with access to the mass media were better informed than most Ghanaians. TV ownership seemed to help citizens identify national (though not local) political leaders, especially the Finance Minister whose name was known by 63.7 percent of TV owners but only 36.3 percent of non-owners. The same held even more strongly for regular radio news listeners: whereas 83.2 percent of those who heard news bulletins every day could name the Vice-President, only 20.5 percent who never listened to the radio news could do so. Regular exposure to newspapers had the strongest impact of all, raising knowledge of the Minister of Finance's name from only 11.0 percent among non-readers to 85.1 percent among daily readers. Indeed, the relationships between media access and these aspects of political knowledge were among the strongest found in this study.¹⁶

The Meaning of Democracy

Since democracy is a relatively unfamiliar form of government in Africa, we wondered how Ghanaians understood the meaning of the term. The survey asked directly: "what is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word 'democracy'?" Respondents were free to answer this open-ended question in their own words; answers were coded into categories only after the fact. About three out of four Ghanaians (74.4 percent) provided some definition of democracy, while the remainder said that they either did not know what democracy was (13.2 percent) or that they had never heard of democracy (12.4 percent). On the face of it, this finding suggests that critics may be mistaken when they argue that democracy has no meaning for Africans.

But much depends on the content that citizens attach to the term. The most common popular definition (27.8 percent of the whole sample) referred to civil liberties, especially freedom of speech. For example, selected respondents suggested that democracy means "being free to talk about



the government”, “allowing people to bring out their own views” and “the ability to say what you think”. The deliberative quality of democracy was nicely captured by a number of respondents who described the democratic system as one in which “you say some and let me say some”, which is a direct translation of a well-known Akan phrase. The second most frequent response (21.6 percent) referred to self-government, expressed as “everyone having a say in government”, “government by the people” or “all Ghanaians ruling the country”. Thirdly, respondents referred to elections (9.3 percent): “using the ballot box to determine who should rule” or “voting to choose leaders”. In sum, we found the same rank order of meanings as the national survey conducted in Ghana two years earlier by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES).¹⁷

Respondents were also provided the opportunity to give a second answer. Of those (n = 129 responses), the most frequent reply associated democracy with social and economic development (22.3 percent), indicating that Ghanaians expect the regime to deliver economic goods as well as political ones. But the second most popular response brought political rights -- notably voting in elections -- back to the fore (19.9 percent).

On balance, then, Ghanaians appear to have a rather liberal and universal conception of democracy that hinges on civil and voting rights and on equality of participation and representation. This finding challenges those who would argue that Africans conceive of democracy in particular and indigenous terms, for example by emphasizing social harmony. To be sure, responses of this kind – “unity”, “peace in the country” – were offered by some respondents in Ghana, but only by a small minority (6.5 percent), who were often older, rural women. And the frequent responses about “government by the people” could be interpreted as having communitarian overtones, thus imparting a Ghanaian flavor to the notion of equal political rights.

A few respondents gave generic answers such as “civilian rule” (3.5 percent), or “good governance” (1.5 percent) that were not specific to democracy. Interestingly, fewer than 1 percent of all respondents painted a negative image of democracy, associating it with social conflict and confusion (0.4 percent), economic hardship (0.3 percent), or official corruption and abuse of power (0.1 percent). This finding flies in the face of the claims by authoritarian leaders that democracy is a risky recipe for social division.

The survey asked those individuals who had some idea of what democracy is whether “Ghana today is a democracy or not a democracy”. An overwhelming majority (84.9 percent) thought that their country measured up to their own definition of democracy. Moreover, 72.2 percent said that the change of political regime ushered in by the founding elections of December 1992 was good for the country, with 35.5 percent considering it very good. Just 9.2 percent felt that the democratic transition was very bad and 12.4 percent did not know one way or the other. At first glance, therefore, there would appear to be a solid constituency for democratic political reforms in Ghana, an issue that we will now explore further with direct reference to popular support for democracy.

Support for Democracy



The best way to judge whether citizens support democracy is to ask about preferences in relation to alternative regimes. The 1999 survey first asked Ghanaians a standard question that yielded three possible answers: a clear majority (76.5 percent) selected the statement that “democracy is preferable to any other form of government”; only a small minority (8.9 percent) chose the statement that “in certain situations, a non-democratic government can be preferable to a democratic one”; and another 14.6 percent agreed that, “to people like me, it doesn’t matter what form of government we have.”

The advantage of standard questions is that they allow comparisons across countries where parallel surveys have been conducted. From a comparative perspective, popular support for democracy in Ghana in 1999 (76.5 percent) was similar to that in Poland and Argentina in 1995 (76.0 and 77.0 percent respectively). It was lower than support in Portugal in 1992 (83.0 percent) and Uruguay in 1995 (80.0 percent) but higher than in Romania in 1995 (61.0 percent) and South Africa in 1997 (56.0 percent for all races, 61.0 percent for African South Africans). Based on these limited comparisons, we suspect that support for democracy in Ghana has reached middling levels among new democracies worldwide, but that the Ghana figures may be high within Africa. If this is true, then Ghana could conceivably be poised to again take a lead in political development in Africa, a position it has not occupied since the time of its independence more than forty years ago.

The finding of high levels of popular support for democracy (as a whole regime) is reinforced by similarly high levels of support for individual rights and other democratic values. Take several examples, such as freedom of speech, universal franchise and the rule of law. Fully 79.6 percent of Ghanaians felt that people with different views to themselves should be allowed to express them (versus only 20.3 percent who felt that free expression was “dangerous and confusing”). Fully 80.4 percent thought that all people should be permitted to vote even if they do not understand all of the issues in an election (versus just 19.6 percent who thought that only “sufficiently well-educated” persons should be allowed to vote).

We consider these figures reliable since respondents were not asked to assent unreflectively to “motherhood” statements, but were asked to choose between “democratic” and “non-democratic” options. These results also replicate the very high levels of support for similar democratic norms found by IEA and IFES in their 1995 and 1997 surveys in Ghana.¹⁸

Support for democracy was somewhat less wholehearted in two important respects. First, while support for democracy is widespread, it is also shallow. Would citizens stand up to defend the regime if democracy was under threat? While about half of the respondents (50.7 percent) said they would “join a protest or boycott” if the government suspended the parliament and canceled the next elections, almost one third (30.4 percent) would “do nothing”. And because the question about protest action was hypothetical, we expect that the “do nothing” crowd would actually be larger in practice. And fewer persons said they would defend judges against wrongful dismissal (46.1 percent) and newspapers against a government shutdown (44.8 percent). The issue that got Ghanaians most upset was the imaginary prospect that the government would “tell you which religion to follow”; 61.6 percent said they would protest a violation of freedom of religion. The fact that more people would defend their religion



than defend elections is indicative of the secondary position that democracy occupies in the Ghanaian hierarchy of values.

Moreover, support for democracy is conditional. Asked to choose between “elected” and “effective” government, 62.0 percent of survey respondents agreed that “the best form of government is one elected by the people” while the remaining 38.0 percent averred that “the best form of government is one that gets things done”. In this regard, Ghana’s distribution of responses was virtually identical to Zambia’s, where 63.4 percent preferred elected government in 1993 and 62.9 percent preferred it in 1996. Because the level of support seems less compelling when the question is asked in this fashion, we suspect that support for democracy in Africa, Ghana included, may be vulnerable to erosion if citizens deem the performance of elected governments to be less than fully effective.

The survey probed further into democracy’s perceived advantages *vis a vis* real- world alternatives. Respondents were asked to rank, on a scale of one to ten, their preferences for the various forms of government that Ghana has recently experienced. Respondents scored “our present system of governing with free elections and many parties” at the top (mean score = 6.7), with no other system of government obtaining a score above 5.0.¹⁹ In rank order, Ghanaians next preferred the “traditional system of government by chiefs” (4.78) and “the old colonial system when the British ruled” (4.68). They confined “the former system of military rule (that is, the PNDC)” (3.61) to the bottom of the list, implying that there was little nostalgia for the previous authoritarian regime.²⁰ This was confirmed by the mere 10.5 percent of Ghanaians who agreed that “the army should come (back) in to govern the country”.

Ghanaians also seemed optimistic as they tried to imagine the form of government that the country might have in five years time.²¹ They granted this (hypothetical) form of government the second highest score overall (6.64), from which we infer that they do not anticipate another military coup but expect some form of civilian multiparty system to survive. Reviewing alternative futures, only small minorities favored “getting rid of elections so that a strong leader can decide everything” (11.9 percent), having “only one political party” (19.8 percent) and leaving “all decisions...to a council of traditional elders” (25.8 percent). Note: even though an oligarchy of chiefs was the second most popular form of rule overall, Ghanaians clearly did not see it as a viable option for a present or future national regime. And, because respondents also rejected one-man and one-party rule, democracy was left, by a process of elimination, as the only preferred prospect in the popular imagination.

In an interesting reversal, Ghanaians seem quite willing to abandon democratic principles in relation to the management of the national economy. In contrast to their reluctance to give up their political rights to “guardians” like military strongmen or traditional chiefs, a clear majority (62.0 percent) agreed that “the most important decisions, for example on the economy, should be left to experts”. Indeed, more than one-third of all respondents (34.8 percent) strongly agreed with the idea of technocratic rule. As later results show, this surprising departure from democratic commitments may be a function of low levels of knowledge about economic reform and a limited popular sense of individual efficacy in an increasingly globalized economy.



Who are the most committed democrats? As might be expected, gender and education helped to predict support for democracy, with males and educated persons being twice as likely as women and persons without schooling to regard democracy as “preferable to any other form of government”. On the question of who should vote, however, educated people proved to be less liberal: those with ten or more years of schooling were twice as likely as those with no schooling to favor restricting the franchise only to “those who are sufficiently well educated”. Interestingly, however, we could detect no meaningful difference in support for democracy between Ghana’s urban and rural areas, even though rural dwellers were more strongly committed to “one person-one vote” than their urban counterparts. Together, these findings suggest that some educated urban elites regard democratic participation as more of a special privilege than a universal right.

Who feels nostalgic for authoritarian rule? In this case, women and rural folk did not stand out among the few people who thought that “non-democratic government can be preferable”. Rather, this authoritarian sentiment was strongest among younger and (again, oddly) more educated people. What sort of authoritarian rule did different groups find acceptable? Interestingly, all segments of society opposed the re-entry of the military into positions of political power. But people with no education (29.1 percent) were much more willing to countenance one-party rule than were highly educated persons²² (10.3 percent). Thus, a key weakness in democratic commitment in Ghana is the potential acquiescence of a stratum of the population to the imposition of new constraints on multiparty competition.

On the other hand, people with no education were less likely to strongly support technocratic rule (26.3 percent) than were the highly educated (44.7 percent). This finding raises a quite different threat, namely that educated elites may be tempted to arrogate power to themselves because they think they are best equipped to decide about economic policy.

Satisfaction with Democracy

Around the world, citizens say that democracy looks better in theory than it does in practice. In every country where public opinion on this issue has been tested, levels of satisfaction with democracy (that is, with “the way that democracy actually works”) are lower than levels of support for democracy (that is, as a preferred form of government).

Ghana is no exception. Compared to the 76.5 percent who said that they support democracy in the abstract, just 54.4 percent said that they are “satisfied with the way democracy works in Ghana”. This bare majority looks somewhat more robust once the “neutrals” and “don’t knows” are removed, with just 32.2 percent going so far as to express active *dissatisfaction* with the new regime.

What, precisely, do citizens think elected government does well, especially when compared to the former system of military rule? Clear majorities found “things better now than before” with respect to freedom of speech (84.9 percent), rights of association (86.2 percent) and electoral choice (86.0 percent). On average, only about 10 percent felt that there had been no change along these lines



and hardly 4 percent felt that things had become worse. Overwhelmingly, therefore, Ghanaians associated democracy-in-practice with the concrete delivery of basic political goods.

But the proportion who felt that “things had become worse” was markedly higher with regard to political representation between elections and the delivery of economic goods. Asked whether ordinary people could better influence government since the democratic transition, only 53.9 percent agreed; 27.2 percent saw no change and 18.8 percent actually perceived a decline. With respect to the equal treatment of people by the government, only a minority (37.9 percent) noticed improvement; more than a quarter (26.3 percent) saw no change and more than a third (35.8 percent) saw a decline. And, when asked about living standards, almost one-half (46.6 percent) said that things have worsened since the democratic transition. Only 35.8 percent saw improvement.

Thus Ghanaians clearly consider that elections are not enough. A significant minority wants to influence government on a day-to-day basis and to hold accountable their elected representatives. According to popular opinion, the goals of equal representation and treatment under the law have not yet been attained in Ghana. Interestingly, males and rural dwellers were significantly less likely to say they were satisfied with these aspects of democracy than females and urbanites. If reliable, these results suggest a “reverse gender gap” in perceived access to government and a stronger sense of political deprivation in towns than in the countryside.

Importantly for the long-term consolidation of democracy, Ghanaians also expect material gains. Urban dwellers (and to a lesser extent, women) were most likely to report a perceived decline in society’s living standards under democracy. Whereas 70.6 percent of urbanites saw no change or a decline, the equivalent figure for rural folk was 58.7 percent. Any such widespread popular sense that democracy has yet to deliver economic benefits cannot be cheering to an incumbent government. And these findings from Ghana confirm the general observation that the urban dwellers are the first social group to become politically disaffected if living standards do not rise.

Offsetting this concern, and granting some breathing space to the government, Ghanaians also showed a measure of political patience. Almost three-quarters of all respondents (74.0 percent) agreed that it will take many years for the elected officials to deal with inherited problems. By contrast, the remaining 26.0 percent felt that the country should “try another form of government soon if democracy is unable to produce results”. Reassuringly, only 12.1 percent strongly agreed that the regime of democracy should be abandoned because it had not yet lived up to expectations. While Ghanaians were far from fully satisfied with the regime’s economic record, they remained willing to give it more time to deliver the goods.

Political Trust

To get a sense of the climate for collective action, the survey asked Ghanaians whether they trusted their fellow citizens, their government institutions, and selected non-governmental



organizations. The question in each case asked respondents to say whether they trusted others to “do what is right all or most of the time”.

Interpersonal trust was high in Ghana, with a baseline of 88.9 percent of respondents saying that they trusted their relatives either “somewhat” or “a lot”. This figure slightly exceeds the 85.2 percent of Zambians who answered a similar trust question favorably in 1993.²³ As in other countries, trust declined with distance from kin: 79.1 percent indicated trust for their neighbors, 76.9 percent for members of their own ethnic group, and 59.9 percent for individuals from other tribes. Two facts point to the resilience of ethnicity as a political factor in Ghana. First, there was a noticeable fall-off in trust when the question switched from the respondents’ own ethnic group to “Ghanaians from other tribes”. Second, inter-ethnic trust was markedly lower in Ghana than in Zambia, where 73.8 percent of respondents indicated trust of other ethnic groups.

Trust in government institutions was quite high by comparative standards. The average level of trust in four key government institutions (the national parliament, local government councils, the law courts, and the police) was higher in Ghana in 1999 (61.2 percent) than in either Zambia in 1996 (57.6 percent) or South Africa in 1997 (45.0 percent). As in these other countries, trust in government appeared to fall as citizens gained information on how institutions actually perform. Citizens expressed more trust in distant national bodies such as the parliament (74.1 percent) and the Electoral Commission (66.5 percent), about which they had relatively little first-hand knowledge, than in local institutions like district assemblies (60.6 percent) and the police (49.6 percent), with which they were more intimately acquainted. Thus, absence made the heart grow fonder. And familiarity bred contempt.

A couple of governmental institutions received high trust ratings that deserve comment. Even if they do not want soldiers to run the government, most Ghanaians still seem to trust the army (65.4 percent), a rating that slightly exceeded the trust extended to civilian institutions like political parties (63.7 percent). And the highest trust rating of any government institution was granted to the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (83.0 percent), suggesting that Ghanaians tend to believe what they hear on the radio or see on the TV news.

Generally, however, respondents put more faith in non-governmental institutions (average = 75.3 percent) than in the government itself (average = 66.2 percent). The most trusted institutions were Christian (e.g. churches, 85.0 percent) and the least trusted were Islamic (e.g. mosques, 56.5 percent). This divide across religious denominations reflects the numerical preponderance of Christians in the sample, but also a potentially troubling intolerance among them of minority religions.

Organizational Affiliations

Civil society appears to be alive and well in Ghana. For example, with the exception of weddings and funerals, most respondents (76.9 percent) said that they attend religious services at least once a week. In fact, almost half (44.6 percent) attend more frequently. As elsewhere in Africa, membership of a church or a mosque remains the principal form of non-governmental association in



Ghana and, especially in urban areas and among more educated groups and those with aspirations for upward mobility, evangelical movements have become popular.

Moreover, almost half of all respondents (45.2 percent) reported being a member of a voluntary organization, such as a club, union, cooperative, or similar group. And within this segment, a further half (44.8 percent of group members, or 20.2 percent of all respondents) were civic “activists” in the sense that they held an official leadership position in these associations. Moreover, most people (63.4 percent) said that they had attended a community meeting within the past five years.

It is worth noting that more people said that they “belong” to churches and informal associations than to political parties. Just 34.3 percent claimed to hold a paid-up membership card for a political party, a figure probably inflated by some respondents who erroneously gave a politically correct, but misleading, answer. Double this proportion (66.6 percent) said that they identified with (“feel close to”) a political party, an attitude that serves as a reasonable proxy for how they vote. Among the sample as a whole, 38.3 percent identified with the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) and 25.2 percent with the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP). No other political party secured the allegiance of more than 2 percent of the voting population.

Thus, more than most African countries, Ghana has the makings of a two-party system, though the viability of this system depends on the capacity of the leading opposition party to win support outside its regional base and to mount a credible bid for government. The party identification of survey respondents mirrored the regional voting patterns seen in national elections. For example, 62.9 percent of respondents from the Northern Region said that they felt close to the ruling NDC compared with just 15.9 percent in Ashanti Region. While the proportion of persons identifying with the opposition NPP was highest in Ashanti (37.0 percent), they were outnumbered by the proportion there who claimed no party identification at all (43.6 percent). We read this result partly to mean that many respondents, especially in opposition strongholds, found survey questions on party identification to be threatening and therefore took refuge in non-committal responses. Nationwide, one-third of the electorate (33.4 percent) asserted their democratic right to remain independent, saying that they were not close to any political party.

Political Participation

Almost all respondents claimed to be registered voters (93.6 percent), a very high figure that is consistent with official estimates of virtually universal adult registration for the 1996 election.²⁴ The handful of unregistered adults cited a number of excuses, such as missing the registration drive (40.6 percent of this group) or being under the age of 18 at the time of registration (29.1 percent). Encouragingly, only seven individuals (0.4 percent of all respondents) said that they had no interest whatever in voting (versus 7.3 percent in Zambia in 1996). Thus, even “apathetic” persons who never discuss politics see some value in voting, or at least recognize the advantage of answering positively to a question on the subject.



Like voter registration, a large proportion of adults (88.6 percent), reported voting in the 1996 parliamentary and presidential elections. A slightly smaller proportion (78.6 percent) reported voting in the 1998 local government elections, a figure again far higher than the official turnout reported by the Election Commission.²⁵ Reflecting what we have discovered about weak party identification, respondents said that they voted more often for the individual candidates in parliamentary elections (49.3 percent) rather than for the party to which the candidate belonged (41.7 percent).

When asked whether the December 1996 elections were generally honest or whether some candidates had an unfair advantage, 62.2 percent of the respondents gave a positive appraisal. Note that this figure is considerably lower than the 85.0 percent positive rating found by IFES in early 1997 soon after the national vote had been conducted. Several interpretations are possible including the following: questions were worded somewhat differently, with IFES referring only to the “fairness” of the election without raising the possibility that some candidates had an “unfair” advantage; respondents did not feel as free to speak candidly in the immediate aftermath of the 1996 election as they felt by 1999; or new facts had come to light that reduced the electorate’s approval of the last general election.

As well as examining voting behavior, the survey probed citizen participation between elections. Most political activity in Ghana takes place on a face-to-face basis through oral communication and in parochial settings. The most common act is “getting together with others (in the community) to raise an issue” (53.8 percent) followed by “attending an election rally” (50.2 percent). Very few citizens have ever contacted a political representative for help to solve a problem, whether an Assemblyperson (26.8 percent), chief (24.1 percent) or, especially, an M.P. (12.1 percent) or a public servant (10.8 percent). Within the locality, people try to solve problems by turning instead to political patrons or to other influential persons (27.7 percent), including entrepreneurs in the private sector. In seeking help beyond the family, however, people most commonly make use of non-governmental ties, especially to religious leaders (41.7 percent).

All other political activities like joining a demonstration (8.4 percent), signing a petition (6.5 percent), and writing to a newspaper (4.9 percent) are the preserve of tiny minorities. Not surprisingly, any action requiring reading and writing in English is more common among those with formal education.²⁶ Similarly, education and gender affect the propensity to contact leaders, with educated men feeling much more comfortable with personal political advocacy than women without schooling. For example, whereas 35.8 percent of men had ever contacted an Assembly representative, only 19.0 percent of women had ever done so.²⁷ And, whereas 19.3 percent of persons with ten or more years of formal education had ever contacted a public official, only 4.5 percent of persons without schooling had ever done so.²⁸

Thus, the structure of society -- especially the relative exclusion of females from education -- poses formidable barriers to universal citizen activism in countries like Ghana. Encouragingly, however, we could find no important social distinctions in electoral participation. For example, unlike Zambia, Ghana displays no meaningful gender differences in voter registration or voter turnout, with women joining in these activities at rates roughly similar to men.



We close this section on the theme of political representation. Since recent elections, constituents have quickly become disillusioned with the services provided by Members of Parliament (MPs). A small, but clear majority of respondents (53.9 percent) was dissatisfied with the performance of the MP by the time of the survey in July 1999 (with 33.4 percent being very dissatisfied). Local government representatives fared slightly better, with 55.9 percent of respondents expressing gratification at the work of their elected Assemblyperson (17.3 percent were very satisfied). Nonetheless, this result must be placed in the context of higher proportion of citizens interviewed (64.6 percent) who praised the performance of non-elected traditional chiefs.²⁹ Thus, generally speaking, there is a worrisome “representation gap” in Ghana between voters and their elected leaders that, over time, could erode the legitimacy of democratic government itself.



PART TWO: ECONOMIC ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

The second part of this report examines the other side of Ghana's "dual transition". It considers how Ghanians situate themselves in the marketplace and economy.

We describe economic attitudes and behaviors first by delving further into popular living standards and strategies for household subsistence. We also measure citizens' sense of well-being, especially compared with their experiences of the past and their expectations for the future. This part of the report then assesses whether Ghanians support basic market values. We end by asking about popular knowledge of recent economic reforms in Ghana and how people evaluate the economic performance of their government.

Living Standards

A brief profile of Ghanaians living standards, including their occupations and levels of income, was provided at the beginning of this report.

In African countries, a person's formal occupation can be a poor guide to their actual livelihood strategy. According to the conventional wisdom, people usually undertake a diversified portfolio of economic activities in order to secure subsistence and make money. Against this expectation, we found relatively low levels of reported supplementary occupations, perhaps because many respondents were already deeply involved in the informal sector as their main source of income. Only about one-third of respondents reported engaging in private trade ("buying goods and selling them at a profit") (36.8 percent) or moonlighting at a second job ("selling skills or services to other people") (35.5 percent).

Private trading was strongly related to the respondent's income,³⁰ mainly because those who had no income rarely did trading (15.3 percent). Among income-earners, private trading was a common activity (51.0 percent), almost equally so across income groups. And, predictably, the higher a respondent's income level, the more likely that he or she would employ other people.³¹

The survey also assessed the adequacy of household income by asking about personal finances. Are people able to save money? Alternatively, do they "break even" by spending all their annual income, or are they forced to borrow money and go into debt? More than half of those interviewed (59.3 percent) said they essentially break even, while another 24.0 percent have to dip into savings or borrow in order to make ends meet. A significant proportion (8.8 percent), find it necessary to do *both*, that is to run down savings as well as to borrow. In general, only 16.8 percent reported that they are able to save money.

Not surprisingly, personal financial circumstances vary considerably by income.³² At lower levels of income (less than 50,000 cedis per month) only 13.1 percent of people saved money; at higher levels (700,000-1 million cedis) 50.0 percent of people did so. Higher income earners (and savers)



were also very much more likely to operate a bank account³³, a practice followed by 30.3 percent of Ghanaians overall.

Housing conditions and household amenities provide another indication of living standards. Among those surveyed, 80.9 percent had a corrugated or tile roof on their home and 72.2 percent had a radio, though we could not confirm that radios were working or if batteries were available. While these basic conveniences were evidently enjoyed by a substantial proportion of Ghanaians, only 31.8 percent had piped water in their homes. As might be expected, wealthier and urban households were consistently more likely to report ownership of status goods than poorer and rural households.

The survey asked directly about the availability of several basic needs including food, water, education and health. Reassuringly, two out of three Ghanaians (67.3 percent of respondents) reported that they never had a problem securing food for the household, though fewer (60.8 percent) could always obtain water. A similar percentage (59.3 percent) did not lack access to school for their children, while only 53.4 percent had ready availability of health care.

Although many Ghanaians have reliable access to essentials, there is also significant evidence of privation. For instance, 32.7 percent of respondents had at least occasional difficulty in securing supplies of food, with 9.9 percent reporting that they go without food “frequently” or “all the time.” Similarly, 39.2 percent had some difficulty getting water, with 13.7 percent reporting they did without water frequently or all the time. The difficulty in obtaining social services was somewhat more pronounced, as 46.6 percent of those interviewed reported at least occasional difficulties in obtaining health care, and 18.0 percent had frequent or continual problems. Nearly 41 percent had some problems in access to schooling. For 15.1 percent, the problem was regular or chronic.

As before, access to basic needs differed according to income, as well as between rural and urban populations. Ghanaians at lower levels of income (below 50,000 cedis per month) had significantly greater problems than did upper-income groups in securing food and health care.³⁴ Income differences were less significant, however, in determining access to water, perhaps because breakdowns of urban piped water networks affect everyone equally. Also, rural residents reported significantly greater problems than urban respondents in gaining access to public goods such as education and health care.³⁵ But, because they have opportunities to provide themselves with certain types of household necessities, they resembled urban dwellers in terms of water and food security.

Social Capital

Under conditions of economic hardship, one wonders what sort of strategies Ghanaians use to meet their basic needs. When formal channels are insufficient to provide for necessities, people must search for alternative options: they may look to family members or other social contacts, seek help from the local community or civic organizations, petition (or bribe) government officials, or use market outlets. The relative use and availability of these different channels are important indicators of the extent



of social capital, the quality of community relationships, and the capacity of the market to provide public goods.

Those people who responded that they had difficulty securing basic necessities were asked whom they turn to when they encounter such problems. A significant proportion said they had no recourse at all. For instance, with regard to food supply, 51.0 percent of respondents with problems securing food stated that they turned to “no one” for help. For those needing water, 34.8 percent had nowhere to turn, while 47.0 percent of those having trouble with access to schooling, and 40.0 percent of respondents in need of health care, did not have alternative strategies. They simply did without.

Those who do have alternatives evidently use varying strategies for different needs. We would expect family networks to be important in Ghana, and this is largely confirmed by the survey. Kin groups provided the most important recourse in helping with food, schooling, and health care: 32.5 percent of respondents said they turned to kin when they were unable to get food, 27.9 percent sought help from kin for education, and nearly 30.8 percent for health care. When kinship networks were unavailable or depleted, the next most common alternative was private provision: 12.2 percent of respondents relied on market outlets to supplement food supply, 14.4 percent in the case of schooling, and 17.3 percent in health care.

More people use market solutions in addressing shortages of water (31.9 percent) than for any other basic commodity. In recent years, private entrepreneurs have set themselves up with water tankers on the back of trucks to deliver household water in urban settlements, often at quite expensive prices. This substantial ‘privatization’ is largely by default: the reliance on the market is a reflection of insufficient or irregular public provision, rather than a matter of government policy. A significant group (14.7 percent) rely on kin, but an equivalent share (13.2 percent) seek out the local community or voluntary associations. Only 2.4 percent said they go to government, while 3.0 percent admit “unapproved or illicit” sources for water, including even theft from other individuals or institutions. The use of ‘unapproved’ channels, though small, is significantly larger for water than for any other basic need. In all other instances, unapproved sources were cited by fewer than 1 percent of respondents.

It is interesting to note that few Ghanaians turn to their local communities or voluntary associations in order to satisfy basic needs. Only 3.5 percent of respondents cited community groups for help obtaining food, and only slightly more for help with social services: 5.2 percent for school, and 5.1 percent for health care. In many instances, recourse to government is even less common: a scant 0.5 percent looked to government to supplement food supplies, although 5.2 percent turned to public authorities for help with education, and 6.0 percent for health.

All told, these data bespeak a kin-based society that, in time of need, relies principally on emergency assistance from relatives. Beyond this first line of defense, Ghanaians seem somewhat more likely to depend on the market than on civil society or the government.

This generalization is reinforced by findings about popular trust in private economic institutions. Banks (84.3 percent), businesses (74.1 percent) and trade unions (76.7 percent) were



generally found trustworthy. While more evidence is needed, one possible interpretation is that Ghanaians never internalized the PNDC ideology that condemned capitalist institutions as corrupt and exploitative. Instead, they show a measure of confidence in the private sector institutions that are associated with economic reform, whose transparency they rate more highly than government (recall that trust in four governmental institutions averaged 61.2 percent). Offsetting this interpretation, however, we observed that trust in banks and businesses was higher among rural folk and persons with no schooling, suggesting that at least part of popular confidence is “blind trust”.³⁶

Evaluations of Personal Well-Being

Overall, respondents evaluated their own current living conditions in nearly the same way as they viewed the general economy. A clear majority was unsatisfied. Whereas 68.3 percent felt this way about their own present conditions, 66.0 percent were unsatisfied with the economy as a whole. Similarly, almost 25 percent were “fairly satisfied” with their conditions (26.8 percent for the overall economy), and just 6.9 percent were “very satisfied” (against 7.2 percent for the economy).

Indeed, views of the economy – whether from a “personal” or “sociotropic” perspective – were closely intercorrelated.³⁷ In making these assessments, we suspect that Ghanaians, like citizens elsewhere, tend to generalize from their own well-being. They derive their views on the economy as a whole from their satisfaction with their personal circumstances rather than vice-versa. As one might guess, persons in the top income bracket were much more likely to be satisfied with their personal well-being (57.2 percent) than those with no income (33.0 percent).³⁸

These assessments of personal well-being, however, differed significantly from Ghanaians’ estimation of their welfare over time. Looking backwards into the past, respondents had mixed views about changes in their economic conditions. Although 43.7 percent of those surveyed said they were less satisfied with their lives today as compared with five years ago, another 38.9 percent stated they were more satisfied. On this attitude, rural dwellers were somewhat more likely to report satisfaction with recent economic gains than urbanites.³⁹

In spite of past disappointments, respondents expressed substantial optimism about their personal prospects. More than half of all respondents (52.2 percent) said they expect to be more satisfied in a year, compared with only 16.7 percent who expected to be less satisfied. Once again, the top income earners were markedly more optimistic (85.7 percent) than those without cash income (46.9 percent).⁴⁰

It should be noted that Ghanaians remain optimistic about their own prospects even as they doubt the government’s ability to deliver improvements. Among those surveyed, 46.0 percent said they believed the government would “never” fulfill its promises, and another 16.7 percent expected that it would take more than eight years for government promises to be realized. They were far less skeptical



about their own opportunities, with only 23.9 percent resigning themselves to “never” meeting their personal goals for improved livelihood. Rather, 56.3 percent of respondents expected that their living standards would meet their expectations within eight years, and 41.5 percent believed they would achieve this personal goal in four years or less. These results suggest that Ghanaians have limited expectations that government will advance their welfare, but instead intend to rely on their own initiative.

Support for Market Principles

This last inference is supported by responses to questions regarding market principles. Ghanaians express considerable sympathy for values of personal self-sufficiency and individual enterprise. A strong sense of self-reliance is balanced, however, by a deep attachment to community or government provision of key goods and services.

Take the popular belief in individual responsibility. More than half (55.5 percent) of the respondents agreed with the statement that “people should look after themselves and be responsible for their own success in life”. They did so even when offered the alternative that “the government should bear the main responsibility for ensuring the well-being of people”. Importantly, one out of three persons (35.3 percent) agreed strongly with the self-reliant option. Only 44.5 percent agreed with the alternative view that individual welfare was a government responsibility. In this regard, Ghanaians had a slightly firmer commitment to individual responsibility than did Zambians, 51.6 percent of whom preferred to rely on government in 1996.⁴¹

Respondents displayed entrepreneurship, with 86.4 percent agreeing that individuals should pursue good business ideas, even if they must invest savings or borrow to make a business succeed. Only 13.6 percent believed that “there is no sense in trying to start a new business because many enterprises lose money”. These responses are interesting in light of interviewees’ opinions about their own business prospects. When asked “how easy or hard is it for a person like you to start a business?”, 88.2 percent replied that it was hard, with 63.8 percent responding “very hard”.

Those interviewed also generally believed in the benefits of individual initiative, as 70.2 percent agreed (43.9 percent strongly) with the statement that people should be “free to earn as much as they can, even if this leads to differences in income”. Only 29.8 percent took the opposite view that the government should “place limits on how much the rich can earn, even if this discourages some people from working hard”. This apparent willingness of Ghanaians to tolerate the principle of social inequality is somewhat contradicted, however, by their dissatisfaction with growing wealth gaps in practice (see below).

While we found strong support for market values, public attitudes also favored a strong role for government or community authorities in some areas of the economy. With regard to employment,



for instance, responses were decidedly ambiguous. In response to paired statements, 51.2 percent of those interviewed agreed that independent private business is the best way to create jobs, while 48.8 percent thought that government should provide employment. However, when asked in a separate question to choose the best provider for creating jobs, nearly two-thirds cited government (66.0 percent), while only 3.7 percent named individuals or businesses as the best source of job creation. Such attitudes could reflect positive memories of the policy of full employment pursued by successive pre-adjustment governments and the reformist regime's weak record of employment generation.

Views on property rights also reflected a less pronounced market orientation. While more than 39.2 percent of respondents believed that rural land should be freely owned and traded, almost 60.8 percent agreed that land should be communally owned, and allocated by chiefs. One way or the other, most respondents held strong views on this issue. Rural dwellers (80.7 percent) expressed stronger views than urbanites (64.7 percent). And, predictably, more rural people strongly favored traditional tenure arrangements (48.2 percent) than a free market in land (32.5 percent).

The survey also asked people to name the best provider for key goods and services: was it the government, private businesses, individuals, or some combination of these? When asked who should be responsible for protecting the nation's borders, respondents readily agreed (by a margin of 92.0 percent) that the government should be responsible. When it came to building homes, 78.5 percent believed that individuals should be primarily responsible, with only 9.9 percent supporting provision by government. These two responses "anchored" the outer points of the range of possible responses between government and individual provision.

All other goods and services were deemed to fall somewhere between these extremes. In the area of social services, most Ghanaians saw the government as the main provider: 76.6 percent believed that government should be the primary source of schools and clinics, while 14.9 percent believed that government, individuals and businesses each had a role. With regard to reducing crime, 76.1 percent of those interviewed believe that government was mainly responsible, although 11.1 percent thought that individuals should get involved in government anti-crime programs. Ghanaians generally seem to find difficulty in imagining roles for themselves in the provision of services that have historically been the preserve of government.

Furthermore, many Ghanaians considered that the role of government is not limited to the provision of major public goods, but should also extend to some markets. Regarding agricultural credit, for instance, 76.8 percent of respondents thought that the government should be the main provider, with only a small proportion pointing to businesses (11.0 percent) or individuals (3.6 percent). Moreover, 63.7 percent still believed that the government should be mainly responsible for buying and selling cocoa, with only 6.7 percent assigning this mainly to individuals, and 2.2 percent to private firms. This latter finding was unexpected, considering the prevalence of criticism toward government marketing boards and the recent history of reform efforts to deregulate cocoa marketing.

Attitudes To Economic Reform



Which brings us to attitudes towards economic reform. The survey examined the public's familiarity with government policies, their evaluations of the effectiveness of the government reform program, their perceptions of the costs and benefits of reform to different groups in society, and their opinions about specific economic policies or reform issues.

Fewer than half of all Ghanaians (41.0 percent) had heard of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP), which has guided the government's policies since 1983. This implies, of course, that a majority (59.0 percent) was unfamiliar with, or could not recall hearing about, the ERP. Knowledge of the government's economic policies did not differ significantly among rural and urban residents, but it did vary substantially by gender and education. While 52.2 percent of men could identify the ERP, only 30.2 percent of women were familiar with the program. When sorted by education, the differences were also striking: only 18.7 percent of those with no education could identify the ERP, compared with 36.1 percent of respondents with less than ten years of education, and 65.4 percent among those with more than ten years.

The majority of those who were familiar with the ERP showed an appreciation of the nominal goals of reform. Those who had heard of the program were asked an open-ended question about the objectives of the ERP, and about three-quarters of the respondents identified the program with one of two positive (though vague) objectives: improving the economy (45.8 percent) or improving living conditions (30.8 percent). The remainder associated the ERP with more specific goals such as economic stabilization (7.4 percent), institutional reforms like privatization (4.8 percent), improvements in service delivery (4.1 percent) or increases in jobs and productivity (2.9 percent). A small percentage listed other broad goals such as national self-reliance (0.4 percent) or national unity (1.7 percent).

Remarkably, only 1.6 percent spontaneously cited the negative goal of "bringing hardship and difficulties." This statistic alone causes one to wonder whether "ERP-bashing" by certain Accra-based intellectual elites is based on solid knowledge of public opinion.

The survey also asked those who were familiar with the ERP about their level of satisfaction with the program. Popular attitudes were relatively balanced, a somewhat surprising finding in light of the critical tone of much public discourse about these policies. Clearly, discontent with the reform program is substantial. Just over half of all Ghanaians (53.3 percent) were dissatisfied with the ERP and 23.3 percent stated they were "very unsatisfied". On the other hand, 34.2 percent reported some degree of satisfaction with the program, but only 7.0 percent were "very satisfied". A significant proportion (12.5 percent) hedged their bets by expressing neutrality toward the government's structural adjustment package.

In many developing countries, perceptions of "fairness" have a profound influence on the popular acceptability of economic liberalization programs. The prevalent view in Ghana is that the costs and benefits of the ERP have not been equitably distributed. Fifty-seven percent of those surveyed agreed with the statement that "the Economic Recovery Programme has hurt most people and only



benefitted a minority”.⁴² Because 42.5 percent agreed strongly with this statement, negative views on the ERP appear to be intensely held.

There is also a widespread view that allies and friends of the government are the chief beneficiaries of public policies. Among those holding a critical opinion of the ERP, an overwhelming 74.3 percent selected “people close to the government” as the “minority” believed to benefit from reform policies. The other groups that might have benefitted (like foreign businesses, rural areas, selected regions of Ghana) were each identified by less than 5 percent of respondents. Thus political elites are widely thought to enjoy a head start over other groups in taking advantage of the new opportunities offered by economic reform.

Given the importance of ethnic rivalries in many African countries, it is interesting to note that Ghanaians display limited concern about emerging regional disparities. Only 2.7 percent of the total sample believed that a specific Ghanaian region had benefitted from the ERP. Among this tiny minority, however, 42.2 percent emphasized the president’s region of Volta, while another 14.6 percent stressed the central Ashanti Region.

As might be expected, however, there is also some belief that Ghana’s economic elites have gained disproportionately from economic reform. Among the list of potential beneficiaries from the ERP, and distinct from the government elites who are seen as the prime beneficiaries, 5.5 percent identified “the rich”, “elites”, or “business owners”.

Expectations of future benefits often affect citizens’ willingness to endure economic austerity. Perhaps because they are suffering from “adjustment fatigue” after sixteen years of reform, Ghanaians are not inclined to be patient about the burdens of the government’s economic programs. A significant majority (62.5 percent) of respondents agreed with the statement that “the costs of reforming the economy are too high; the government should therefore change its policies”, with 40.0 percent agreeing strongly. Only 37.5 percent leaned toward the view that “in order for the economy to get better in the future, it is necessary for us to accept some hardships now”; just 19.7 percent registered strong agreement.

This lack of patience with economic policy stands in contrast to our earlier finding of patience with the regime of democracy. Whereas almost two-thirds of respondents wanted immediate changes in economic policy, only one-quarter wanted to abandon democracy in order to try a different type of regime. We infer from these findings that Ghanaians draw a healthy and rather sophisticated distinction between the policies of the government of the day and the procedures of democratic rule. They are not about to throw the baby (democracy) out with the bath-water (the ERP).

Of course, general assessments of the ERP or of “government economic policies” provide only a partial vantage on popular attitudes toward economic reform. It is also important to consider opinions about specific policies in the adjustment package. In many respects, Ghanaians do not



hold consistent, ideologically-inspired views across issues. They neither accept or reject structural adjustment wholeheartedly. Instead, they pick and choose among its component policies. Some aspects of the ERP are acceptable to Ghanaians, while others are not.

Traditionally, African governments have offered subsidies on a variety of commodities and public services, often accompanied by state control of these markets. The reduction of subsidies, and the liberalization of markets, have been contentious issues in economic reform throughout the region. In general, Ghanaians show some acceptance of reduced subsidies, and the consequent price increases for goods and services.

Many respondents endorsed the market allocation of consumer goods: fully 72.4 percent agreed with the statement that “it is better to have goods available in the market, even if the prices are high”, compared with the 27.6 percent who agreed that “it is better to have low prices, even if there are shortages of goods”. This is largely consistent with other views about economic roles. When asked whether they prefer government or private actors to sell consumer goods, 53.5 percent selected mainly private sources: 39.5 percent preferred individuals, 9.5 percent identified businesses and individuals, and 4.5 percent saw business as the main source. A much smaller proportion (21.6 percent) preferred that the government should be chiefly responsible. The balance (17.0 percent) chose some combination of public and private provision.

In the area of social services, many people accept the need for user fees as long as the costs are linked to improvements in service: 76.9 percent of respondents agreed (56.5 percent strongly) that “it is better to raise educational standards, even if we have to pay school fees”. Only 23.1 percent agreed with the statement that “it is better to have free schooling for our children, even if the quality of education is low”.

Many of those interviewed also seem receptive to foreign involvement in the Ghanaian economy. A substantial majority of respondents (69.3 percent) agreed that “in order to create jobs, the government should encourage foreign companies to invest in our country”, while only 30.7 percent leaned toward the view that “the government should be wary of foreign investors because they may gain control of our national wealth”.

While respondents endorsed some important elements of economic liberalization, especially market pricing for goods and services, they were less sympathetic toward other policies commonly promoted by advocates of reform. In particular, they balked at the institutional reforms within the adjustment package. There remains among the general public a strong commitment to government employment and ownership in the economy, perhaps because paid employment in the public or para-statal sectors remains a core source of livelihood for many Ghanaian families.

Take several examples. With regard to public sector employment, 72.5 percent of respondents agreed that “all civil servants should keep their jobs, even if paying their salaries is costly to the country”. By contrast only 27.4 percent felt that “the government cannot afford so many public



employees and should lay some of them off”, with just 11 percent expressing strong agreement. Similarly, when asked about the privatization of public enterprises, 69.8 percent of those surveyed believed that “the government should retain ownership of its factories, businesses, and farms”. Again, since a majority of all respondents (51.7 percent) agreed strongly to this item, opposition to privatization would appear to be acutely felt. Conversely, only 31.1 percent agreed that “it is better for the government to sell its businesses to private companies and individuals”.

We think that strong public commitment to paid public employment arises from a number of considerations. It reflects the fact that the government is still the country’s largest employer and that government employment offers more job security than the private sector. Moreover, it probably also reflects the perception that government jobs, even the most lowly, offer more room for “skimming”, rent-seeking, and other modes of illegal income supplementation.

Some market principles appear to have diffused widely throughout society and to have gained support from a broad cross-section of the population. For example, support for foreign investment and for market pricing for consumer goods is widespread, regardless of gender, education, income or residential location. By contrast, other market principles are championed by particular social groups. Support for school fees is more pronounced among educated elites in urban areas, whereas rural persons without education will more readily accept low quality schooling as long as it is free. And, support for the privatization of public corporations, limited though it is, is led by educated urban males.

Generally speaking, however, the pattern of support for economic reforms is much the same in Ghana as it is in Zambia. In both countries, citizens generally accept market pricing in return for the ready availability of goods, and user fees in return for improvements in the quality of services. Yet, also in both countries, citizens have yet to be convinced of the benefits of reforming public employment by cutting back on the civil service and public corporations. On the basis of the data from Ghana and Zambia, this pattern of public attitudes to economic reform – favoring the liberalization of prices, but opposing the downsizing of the state – can be expected to prevail in other African countries too.

Assessments of Economic Performance

Finally, we turn back to the important issue of popular dissatisfaction with the current state of the country’s economy. Just under two thirds of Ghanaians (66.0 percent) were unsatisfied with national economic conditions, and 41.3 percent were “not at all” satisfied. Variation was found among urban and rural populations: more urbanites felt displeased (72.1 percent) than their country cousins (60.0 percent).

Whom do Ghanaians hold responsible for the state of the economy? We asked this question because assignment of credit or blame by citizens is likely to influence popular evaluations of government performance.

Ghanaians tend to believe that domestic leaders and markets, rather than external forces, are primarily responsible for the country’s economic situation. Three out of five persons (60.9 percent)



cited the current (NDC) government, and another 9.5 percent pointed to “the old (PNDC) government”. A significant proportion, 20.5 percent, named “we, the people”. In this regard, Ghanaians were perhaps a bit more self-critical than Zambians, only 15.7 percent of whom held themselves responsible in 1996.⁴³ A mere 3.4 percent of Ghanaians named the IMF/World Bank, while just over 1 percent named the ERP. The question allowed for an open-ended category of “other”; it is worth noting here that just under 1 percent named “supernatural forces” -- such as God, the devil, or fate -- as the prime influence on the economy.

Views toward the economy, however, were not entirely consistent with general opinions of the government’s record, suggesting that citizens weigh diverse factors in their assessment of public performance. Respondents generally offered a mixed assessment of the present (NDC) government’s efforts, dividing themselves into three almost equal-sized groups. Exactly 30.0 percent of those surveyed rated the government’s performance as “bad” or “very bad”, against 36.0 percent with a rating of “good” or “very good.” The other third (33.9 percent) took a middle position, viewing the government’s record as “fair”.

Some observers of Ghanaian politics have surmised that support for the NDC government is stronger in the rural areas than the towns, in part because of the beneficial effects of increased agricultural producer prices and other market reforms. This variation in support is tentatively confirmed by the survey results.⁴⁴ While 44.0 percent of rural residents offered ratings of “good” or “very good”, only 26.8 percent of urbanites were favorable.

The balanced evaluations of government performance (with similar proportions of the populations saying government performance is either “good”, “bad”, or indifferent) are reflected in public opinion regarding the government’s handling of various policy problems. For example, opinion was evenly split on how well the government was “addressing the educational needs of all Ghanaians”: 51.2 percent gave negative assessments, against 49.8 percent with positive judgements. Concerning the delivery of basic health services, 46.3 percent were negative and 53.7 percent positive. Once again, rural dwellers proved to be more (easily?) satisfied than urbanites, being significantly more likely to say that the government was handling education and health services well.⁴⁵

Evaluations were more negative towards the government’s economic management, especially pertaining to policies affecting incomes and equity. When asked how well the government was handling job creation, nearly 60.8 percent said the government was doing “quite badly” or “very badly”. Even more people (66.0 percent) felt that the government was doing badly in controlling inflation (“keeping prices down”) and reducing economic inequality (“narrowing income gaps”) (67.5 percent). These results suggest that the government has encountered problems in managing the social consequences of the adjustment program. While price inflation has been reduced, it remains too high. And while economic growth has revived, its benefits are perceived to be concentrated in the hands of wealthier income groups. From the public’s perspective, any benefits from the government’s economic strategy have been slow to materialize and to trickle down.



What explains public evaluations of government performance? We find at least three factors at work.

First, individual citizens refer to their own sense of well-being in judging how well the government is performing. Perceptions of personal well-being also help to form attitudes towards the ERP. Among those who answered that they were “much less satisfied” with their personal economic situation in 1999 compared with five years ago, 45.4 percent rated the government’s overall performance as bad.⁴⁶ At the other end of the spectrum, 59.8 percent of respondents who were “much more satisfied”, viewed the government’s record as good. The effect of subjective well-being was even more marked for evaluations of the ERP.⁴⁷

Second, when “grading” the government, citizens also refer to the general state of the national economy. For example, of those who were the least satisfied with the overall economy, 48.3 percent rated the NDC government’s record as bad. Conversely, of those who were the most satisfied with the economy, fully 86.2 percent saw government performance as good. Indeed, government approval ratings were tied to citizen perceptions of health of the macro-economy in an extremely strong and significant fashion.⁴⁸ In fact, socio-tropic assessments (of the economy of the whole) had more impact on other attitudes than personal well-being, a finding that is consistent with survey results from South Africa and other parts of the world.⁴⁹

Third, and by now predictably, attitudes to the ERP were also connected to approval of the NDC government. More than half (52.9 percent) of those least satisfied with the ERP rated government performance negatively; and almost three quarters (73.5 percent) of those most satisfied with the ERP rated government performance positively.⁵⁰ Whether political leaders like it or not, the standing of incumbent governments hinges critically on the kinds of economic policies they implement.



PART THREE: ATTITUDES TO THE RULE OF LAW

Some analysts have suggested that countries in the developing world have tried to install democracy “backwards”.⁵¹ Whereas Western industrial countries possessed well-established legal systems before they held broad-based elections, developing countries have held such elections before securing the rule of law. Thus the problem of consolidating democracy in poor countries often boils down to issues of governance. Key governance tasks include ensuring the political accountability of elected leaders and building the legitimate authority of the state. Accordingly, the democracy and governance programs of development assistance agencies are increasingly emphasizing policies and projects to enhance the rule of law.

In this report, we conclude the presentation of results with a profile of citizen perceptions of the rule of law in Ghana. This brief section reviews public attitudes to official corruption, compliance with state authority, and crime.

Official Corruption

The survey revealed widespread public perceptions of official corruption in Ghana. In one of the survey’s most startling findings, an overwhelming 84.9 percent of Ghanaians thought that bribery was common among public officials. And fully 62.4 percent held this view strongly. These levels of perceived corruption are much higher than in other African countries like Zambia in 1996 (56.6 percent) or South Africa in 1997 (49.8 percent).

Similarly, three out of four respondents (76.2 percent, 45.9 percent strongly) thought that “most government officials and politicians are mainly concerned with enriching themselves”. A smaller proportion (62.9 percent) thought that official corruption these days was worse than “under the old military government”, although they still associated democratization with a decline in public probity. And, survey respondents gave the second lowest approval rating (33.6 percent) to the government’s handling of corruption among all the areas of government performance that they were asked to evaluate. Only the government’s efforts to “narrow income gaps”, a policy concern that is seen to be closely related to graft reduction⁵², were given a lower rating (32.5 percent approval).

The costs of such perceptions can be high. For example, suspicions of official corruption helped to fuel the “representation gap” noted earlier between elected leaders and their constituents.⁵³ Fifty seven percent of citizens who were very dissatisfied with their MP’s performance also agreed strongly that politicians were “mainly concerned with enriching themselves”. Only 40.7 percent of people who were very satisfied with their MP’s performance thought the same way.

Against this trend, we note that Ghanaians place a fair measure of trust in the law courts, with 60.3 percent finding these bodies trustworthy. But this interpretation rests on the fact that Ghanaians generally display a generous level of trust in government. We also note that the law courts are rated lower than any other government institution except the police. The fact that, relatively speaking, the



general public tends to withhold trust from the agencies of law enforcement is disturbing in the light of Ghana's quest for good governance.

Nonetheless, other responses pointed to a more balanced judgement about the accountability of leaders, for example giving the head of state somewhat higher marks than some other officials. A stunning 87.3 percent (77.0 percent strongly!) considered that the President of Ghana should obey the constitution (versus only 12.7 percent who thought he should be able to change the constitution "whenever he chooses"). In practice, Ghanaians were evenly divided about whether "the president fights corruption wherever he finds it" (48.2 percent) and whether "politicians and civil servants are trying to look after the interest of people like me" (48.9 percent). And they defended President Rawlings against political favoritism, with only 36.7 percent believing that his home region "gets more government services than any other region".

Most importantly, public perceptions of official corruption far outstrip citizens' actual experience with it. When asked how often, in practice, a public official had asked them for a bribe or a favor, fully 69.6 percent said that they had *never* been asked. Instead, 8.3 percent reported being asked once, 13.5 percent said they had been asked a few times, and only 8.6 percent admitted to being asked often.

Respondents cited the following government agencies as the most frequent sources of illegal requests: the police (by 38.6 percent of those who had been asked for a bribe), educational institutions (17.0 percent) and other "civil servants" (16.2 percent). The courts appeared quite low down on this list (just 2.9 percent), as did local government authorities (5.8 percent). Thus, while it is hardly reassuring that rumors abound of official corruption in Ghana, especially since citizens often act on the basis of such perceptions, the real problem may be less widespread than is commonly assumed.

Compliance with the Law

If ordinary citizens think that their leaders are not obeying the law, they may wonder why they, themselves, should do so. In order to estimate both the effectiveness of the state and its popular legitimacy, we asked Ghanaians how often they thought their fellow citizens broke various laws.

Generally speaking, Ghanaians did not see themselves as a particularly law abiding society. Responses varied, however, according to the violation. At one extreme, 77.6 percent of respondents said that other Ghanaians throw rubbish in public places, either "always" or "most of the time". And smaller majorities considered that their fellow citizens ignored traffic signs (63.0 percent), engaged in petty-trading without a licence (60.7 percent), and evaded income taxes (50.0 percent). And confirming the (possibly false) public preoccupation with official corruption, fully 80.0 percent of respondents thought that Ghanaians "offered bribes to public servants" all or most of the time.

As might be expected, suspicion that others are illegally obtaining special treatment is connected to the respondent's level of interpersonal trust. Whereas 70.4 percent of respondents who "did not trust their neighbors at all" thought that Ghanaians were "always offering bribes to public officials",



just 57.5 percent of those who “trust their neighbors a lot” held the same opinion.⁵⁴ But, to repeat an earlier point, if fewer than one in three Ghanaians has ever been asked for a bribe, let alone actually paid one, then Ghanians may actually be more law abiding than they give themselves credit for.

Safety and Security

Beyond the civil infractions mentioned above, we probed public perceptions of the crime situation. We wondered whether Ghana resembled South Africa and Russia, where a transition to democracy was accompanied by an epidemic of violent crime.

The most favorable finding is that socio-political trends in Ghana seem to run in the opposite direction. Half of all respondents (50.6 percent) said that felt safer (“when walking about alone”) under the new democratic regime than they had five years earlier. By contrast, only about one-third (35.5 percent) felt less safe. The remainder could feel no difference.

This fascinating finding poses the question of why Ghana seems to be exceptional among new democracies. Citizens rate the government’s handling of crime more positively (57.4 percent) than its performance in any other policy area. Could it be that, with a former military leader still in power, anti-social elements have been more cautious about taking advantage of the loosening of social controls that accompany democratization? If so, does Ghana risk a crime wave when President Rawlings eventually leaves the stage?

Interestingly, none of the standard social background indicators – gender, age, residential location – helped to account for any changing sense of personal security among Ghanaians. Instead, people with formal education were most likely to feel less safe, a finding that we attributed at first to the risky conspicuousness of higher income in a context of a growing gap between the “haves” and the “have nots”.⁵⁵ But the survey data on household incomes caused us to modify this view. In fact, the income groups most likely to perceive growing personal insecurity are those with no income and those with upper-middle incomes (in the range of 500,000-700,000 cedis per month). The very wealthy (with incomes over one million cedis per month) are more likely than any other group to feel safer from crime, perhaps because they consider their property assets to be better protected from seizure or because they can afford to purchase private security services.

Make no mistake: the incidence of crime reported in the survey was far from insignificant. One in ten persons (9.9 percent) claimed that they, themselves, had been attacked or robbed in a public place at some time during the two previous years. And 17.7 percent apparently had had their house broken into. Counting family members and acquaintances too, victims of crime increased to 33.8 percent (for attack) and 35.2 percent (for housebreaking). So the baseline of crime against which Ghanaians perceive improvements in safety and security may have been quite high to begin with. Unexpectedly, personal attacks were reported slightly more frequently by men than by women.⁵⁶ But, predictably, housebreaking was somewhat more common in the urban areas than in the countryside.⁵⁷



Ghanaians say that, faced with crime, they would employ a range of preventive and reactive measures. Two-thirds (66.5 percent) would report any incident to the police. Others would take matters into their own hands by asking other people to accompany them when going out (47.6 percent), by forming or joining a citizens' group (42.5 percent), or by carrying a weapon (22.2 percent).

Oddly, we did not find that women were more likely to seek a companion when moving about in public, a factor that we thought might help explain their lower reported frequency of personal attacks. And, again oddly, we did not find that a lack of trust in the police had a bearing on the willingness of citizens to report incidents of crime to their local police station. Instead, we found that standard social background factors were at work in determining who did (and who didn't) take political action against crime. As with other aspects of citizen activism, educated (and wealthy) males were again much more likely than unschooled females to form or join citizens' groups to combat crime.⁵⁸ In sum, elites were more likely to enjoy the protections, not only of private security guards, but also of neighborhood watch committees.



CONCLUSION

A Strategic Relationship?

We have described the orientations of Ghanaians toward democracy and markets in 1999. This report represents only a first step. As proposed in the introduction, these data can also be used to address strategic questions about the complex connections between economic and political change. Which has more support: democracy or markets? Are political and economic reforms compatible? Or do they conflict?

Recognizing that more analysis remains to be done, we close with a few general observations:

- ? More Ghanaians support democracy (76.5 percent) than are satisfied with it (54.4 percent).
- ? More Ghanaians are satisfied with democracy (54.4 percent) than are satisfied with the ERP (34.2 percent).
- ? Ghanaians support some aspects of the government's economic reform program (like market pricing) but not others (like shrinking the state).
- ? Those who support political reform are more likely than not to support economic reform (and vice-versa).

Elaborating on the last point, we find that satisfaction with democracy is closely and positively associated with satisfaction with market reforms. Indeed, this was one of the strongest linkages we found in the study.⁵⁹ But we do not know for certain its causal direction. Perhaps those who have benefitted from new opportunities to improve their livelihoods have begun to give credit to the political regime. Or maybe those who have been able to choose their leaders are more willing to accept the hardships associated with economic adjustment. Most probably, the relationship is thoroughly reciprocal, with economic and political reform mutually reinforcing the other.

Nevertheless, the level of support for economic reform clearly lags behind the level of support for political reform in Ghana. Thus, we think that liberal political attitudes are likely to give rise to liberal economic attitudes, rather than vice versa. This interpretation is supported when we divide up the population according to their satisfaction with different types of reform.

- ? The largest group (32.3 percent) is *satisfied* with *both* democracy and markets;
- ? An almost equal-sized group (31.6 percent) *likes political reform* but dislikes economic reform;
- ? The third largest group (29.5 percent) is *unsatisfied* with *both* sorts of reform; and,



? The smallest group (6.6 percent) *likes market reform* but dislikes democracy-in-practice.

We conclude from these summary findings that:

? Most Ghanaians (70.5 percent) are satisfied with *at least some aspect* of reform.

? Most Ghanaians (61.8 percent) regard democracy and markets as “*going together*” in an integrated package.

? These citizens are almost evenly *divided about the appropriateness* of the model of market democracy to Ghanaian circumstances.

? The clear *developmental challenge* (that can be monitored with data like these) is to raise the proportions of people who receive both *political and economic benefits* and who thus report satisfaction with *both* democracy *and* markets.



Appendix 1

Sampling Protocol

Introduction

This document describes the sample design and sampling procedure used in a study of citizens' attitudes towards democracy and markets in Ghana in July 1999. The purpose of the design was to draw a representative sample of all citizens of voting age. The target sample size was 2000 respondents which would allow inferences to the population of Ghana at a 95 percent confidence level with a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points.

Sample Universe

The sample universe included all citizens of Ghana who were 18 years old or older on the day of the survey interview. Persons who were under-age or who were not Ghanaian citizens were excluded from the sample. Nor did the survey consider people living in institutionalized settings (e.g. students in dormitories, persons in prisons, nursing homes, etc.) Also excluded were any areas of the country determined to be either inaccessible or not relevant to the study, such as national parks.

Sample Design

The sample design was a multi-stage, stratified, area cluster probability sample.

The objective of the design was to give every sample element (i.e. eligible adult) an *equal* chance of being chosen for inclusion in the sample. This objective was obtained by using methods of *random* selection at every stage of sampling.

In a series of hierarchical steps, we selected geographically defined sampling units of decreasing size. In order to prevent undue dispersion of survey sites, sampling units were grouped together into randomly selected *clusters*. To ensure that the sample was representative, we adjusted the probability of selection at various stages as follows:

1. The sample was *stratified* by key social characteristics in the population such as ethnicity (using administrative region as a proxy) and residential locale (urban or rural).
2. Random sampling was conducted with *probability proportional to size* (PPS). Larger (i.e. more populated) geographical units had a proportionally greater probability of being chosen.

The sample involved a **four-stage design**:

1. A first stage to *stratify, cluster* and randomly select *primary sampling units*;
2. A second stage to randomly select *sampling start-points*;
3. A third stage to randomly choose housing units (*households*);
4. A final stage involving the random selection of individual *respondents*.

This appendix addresses the sample design according to these stages, focusing first on the selection of primary units and secondary start-points and, next, on the selection of households and respondents.



Sampling Frame

In Ghana, the last census was conducted in 1984 and its population data and maps are now out of date. A new census will be mounted in 2000, but its results were not available in time for the July 1999 survey. The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) has made current estimates of population for selected parts of the country in order to conduct an annual standard of living survey, most recently in 1998. As the basis for these estimates, the GSS has conducted a census of households in 1,000 enumeration areas (EA's), randomly selected from a nationwide frame of 13,000 EA's. The 1,000 EA's were sampled using probability proportional to (population) size (PPS), and may be regarded as representative of the country as a whole. The selected enumeration areas were comprehensively mapped and surveyed.

Although the information available from the Ghana Statistical Service was not perfect for our purposes, it was the best we could find; **we used the GSS information as the sampling frame**. In the first instance, we used the GSS's classification of the country into enumeration areas as the frame for drawing a random sample of primary sampling units. We later relied upon census maps for delineating enumeration areas, and we used households randomly selected by GSS as the starting points for choosing survey households. Wherever possible, we used updated census estimates of national and regional populations as the basis for establishing target sub-sample sizes and for sampling with probability proportional to (population) size.

The GSS population estimates, however, were based on an enumeration of households, rather than a head count of population. This method appeared to underestimate population in areas where average household size was larger (e.g. the northern regions of Ghana). The data available from the GSS did permit an estimation of average household size by region, which allowed us to weight the results from different regions, and thereby compensate for potential distortions in the sample. The GSS sample provided a valid basis for stratification, and for the selection of primary sampling units and sampling start-points.

Primary Sampling Units (PSUs)

The primary sampling units (PSUs) of a probability sample represent the principal level of clustering of the observational units in the survey population. The primary sampling unit for the July 1999 survey in Ghana was the **census enumeration area (EA)**. The master sampling frame was the set of 1,000 EA's selected by the Ghana Statistical Service. From this frame, 100 EA's were randomly chosen for the survey. This figure was arrived at both scientifically and pragmatically. On the one hand we estimated that a clustered sample of PSUs would be representative especially if the sample was stratified to capture major social variations. On the other hand, we calculated the maximum number of EA's that could be comfortably covered given the resources available for fieldwork. We estimated that eight teams of enumerators could cover 100 EA's within ten days in the field, given variations in geography and transportation conditions.

Stage One: Selecting PSUs

The first stage of sampling was to stratify and select the PSUs and to cluster them. To repeat, stratification is a means of ensuring that PSU survey sites reflect the main social features of the population, in this case cultural diversity and an urban-rural divide. (Stratification can also enable over-sampling of minority populations, though we elected not to do so in this sample). Clustering is a means of ensuring that the chosen PSU survey sites are not so scattered across the country that, logistically, they are difficult to reach. We had to make efficient use of our scarce budgetary and time resources.

To meet these goals, the master sampling frame (i.e. the list of EA's) was:



1. *Stratified by Region.* Ghana's administrative regions were treated as proxies for the country's major cultural and linguistic groupings. To ensure adequate coverage of such diversity, all ten regions were included in the sample. But because we did not wish to over-represent minority groups in the national probability sample, the number of respondents from each region exactly reflected the region's relative population size. Using the distribution of population from the current estimates of the GSS, a sample of 2000 was divided across Ghana's 10 regions as follows:

Region	% of population	Target Sample Size
Ashanti	17.1	342
Brong Ahafo	10.6	212
Central	11.65	233
Eastern	11.2	224
Greater Accra	15.85	317
Northern	6.95	139
Upper East	3.05	61
Upper West	1.05	21
Volta	10.75	215
Western	11.8	236
Total	100.0	2000

2. *Stratified by Locale.* All EA's were also classified as predominantly urban or predominantly rural, initially according to GSS classifications, adjusted according to the local knowledge of CDD personnel and field supervisors. (When in the field, survey supervisors made a further classification, deeming sampled settlements as "urban" if, on the basis of verifiable information, they contained 5000 persons or more. Supervisors consulted knowledgeable local officials for help in this exercise).

The two stratification steps (ten regions by two locales) gave rise to twenty strata. All 100 EA's in the sample were classified into one of these strata. The relevant number of EA's were randomly selected for each region according to the table below:

Region	% of population	No. of EA's
Ashanti	17.1	17
Brong Ahafo	10.6	11
Central	11.65	12
Eastern	11.2	11
Greater Accra	15.85	15
Northern	6.95	7
Upper East	3.05	3
Upper West	1.05	1
Volta	10.75	11
Western	11.8	12
Total	100.0	100



Based upon information from the GSS (adjusted by CDD personnel), a distribution among urban and rural areas was assigned as follows:



Region	No. of Urban EA's	No. of Rural EA's	Total EA's
Ashanti	7	10	17
Brong Ahafo	3	8	11
Central	3	9	12
Eastern	3	8	11
Greater Accra	13	2	15
Northern	2	5	7
Upper East	1	2	3
Upper West	1	1	2*
Volta	2	9	11
Western	3	9	12
Total	38	63	101*

*Note: Although the sample originally called for only 1 enumeration area in Upper West Region, we decided to include 2 enumeration areas (1 urban, 1 rural) to avoid excessive clustering and homogeneity.

The procedure for randomly selecting EA's within each stratum followed the method of probability proportional to size. All EA's within each stratum were numbered (e.g. start with urban Ashanti), their population size (or census of households) was recorded, EA's were listed cumulatively by population size, the first EA was randomly chosen using a table of random numbers, a sampling interval was established according to the target number of EA's (e.g. 1/10th for rural Ashanti), and the remainder of EA's were sampled systematically.

We inquired whether it would be desirable to further stratify the urban EA's into formal and informal settlement areas to ensure that we did not inadvertently under-sample the latter. CDD personnel advised that this was not necessary.

3. *Clustering.* The resulting sample of 100 EA's was then examined in terms of logistical feasibility. Would it be possible for eight teams to complete the survey in ten days? Or were the research sites so scattered that inordinate amounts of time would be spent on travel?

Where the sample was logistically unfeasible, we exercised a replacement rule: a similar enumeration area (i.e. falling within the same stratum) was randomly selected, provided that the replacement EA was reasonably accessible. This yielded a hybrid sample (part random, part clustered) that minimized the amount of clustering and thus the sampling error that accompanies it. A total of only 4 out of 100 enumeration areas was replaced using this procedure.

The first stage of sampling was completed in Accra at two weeks before the start of survey interviewing. The survey managers were informed of the regions and localities to be visited so that they could plan logistics for the survey teams.

Stage Two: Selecting Sampling Start Points (SSPs)

Along with a set of maps, supervisors received a cover sheet listing the region and enumeration areas to which their teams traveled. A **sampling start point** (SSP) was required for randomly selecting households within each enumeration area. Thus the number of start-points (100) was the same as the number of EAs. This procedure had the effect of further clustering the sample into manageable geographic areas.



For each enumeration area, a list of 25 randomly-selected households was provided by the GSS. These households were listed by the name of the household head, and by their relative location. The household lists were used as the sampling frame for selecting 100 SSPs. The households were numbered 1 through 25, and one was selected using a random number generator. In order to preserve the anonymity of respondents, no interviews were conducted in households identified as starting points since we possessed their names and addresses. Instead, SSP's were used to begin a walk pattern, described in Stage Three below.

Between 19 and 21 interviews were conducted in each enumeration area. Before going to the field, these figures were rounded up or down to whole numbers (e.g. in Ashanti, 20 interviews each were conducted in 15 EAs and 21 interviews in 2 EAs, for a total of 342 interviews in 17 EAs). The total number of interviews from all EAs in a region accorded with the sample size for the region (See column headed "Sample Size").

Because we did not know the actual condition on the ground in all EA's, we deemed it advisable to draw two alternate SSP's in each EA. These start-points were held in reserve as substitutes to be used by supervisors in the field only if the primary SSP could not be found, or was otherwise deemed inappropriate in terms of the survey's sampling universe. In practice, survey supervisors were able to locate the designated SSP more than 90 percent of the time.

There was a replacement rule for the selection of SSP's. If, after 15 minutes in the EA, the supervisor could not locate any of the three listed starting points, a replacement start-point would be selected. Supervisors were instructed to vary these, and especially to avoid frequent selection of central locations such as a main road or a central government office. A random household in a residential area was most acceptable.

Stage Three: Selecting Households

Once a start-point was identified, employing the rules in the previous section, the enumerators selected respondent households according to a systematic walk pattern. Enumerators were instructed to walk away from the starting point in the following directions: Enumerator 1 towards the sun, Enumerator 2 away from the sun, Enumerator 3 at right angles to Enumerator 1, Enumerator 4 in the opposite direction to Enumerator 3, Enumerator 5 at 45 degrees to Enumerator 1, and so on.

Each enumerator was instructed to choose the fifth dwelling on the right as the target household for the interview. They then followed the procedure in Stage Four (below) for selecting individual respondents.

In sparsely populated rural areas, there were sometimes only a few households around a given start-point. In these cases, the following guidelines applied: If there were 15 or fewer households within walking distance of the start-point, the field team dropped only one enumerator. If there were 16-30 households there, two enumerators could be dropped. And so on. Only if there were 100 or more households within walking distance would the whole team work in a single settlement area.

If only part of the team could be dropped at the randomly selected start point, then the remainder of the team moved to the next nearest housing settlement in any direction. Since there was not a preselected start-point in these replacement areas, the supervisor selected an arbitrary start-point, being sure to vary these in each place (again, random sampling required that we did not always start on the road or in a central place). Enumerators were then assigned to select households and respondents according to established rules.



After completing an interview, and if the Enumerator was instructed to complete more than one return, he or she adopted the following procedure. Continue walking in the same direction. Again choose the fifth dwelling on the right. And so on. If the settlement came to an end and there were no more houses, the enumerator should turn at right angles to the right and keep walking, again looking for the fifth dwelling on the right. This procedure was repeated until an eligible household was found.

Households were defined as a group of persons living together who ate from the same kitchen. When counting dwellings, enumerators were instructed to include separate compounds for multiple spouses or backyard dwellings for relatives, renters or household workers as separate dwellings. If the start point was at a block of flats, or if the walk pattern included a block of flats, enumerators were to stop at every fifth flat.

Stage Four: Selecting Individual Respondents

Once the household was chosen through the method described above, the enumerator was instructed to make a list of all household members 18 years and older (identified by age and gender), even those not presently at home but who would return to the house that evening. From that list the enumerator randomly selected the actual person to be interviewed by: assigning a number to each listed person; and then randomly choosing a numbered card to determine the respondent. The enumerator could interview ONLY that person and no one else in that household.

We have found that in many areas in Africa, elders or heads of households may be insulted by being excluded by a random method that they do not understand. Thus it was preferable to ask the head of household to help select a respondent by choosing the numbered card. Again, the person interviewed was the one whose card bore that number. Because the process was visible, it often reduced chances for any possible conflict or tension. In practice, this lottery system was universally well received by respondents and other householders.

Note: We actively sought to eliminate the gender bias (especially the over-representation of male respondents) that crept into earlier survey samples in Ghana. We did so by holding open the option of introducing a gender quota into respondent sampling if this proved necessary. Supervisors were instructed to monitor returns on a daily basis to ensure that an approximately equal number of men and women were being interviewed. If a gender bias arose (say too few female respondents), the supervisor instructed certain enumerators (in this case preferably female enumerators) to list for interview only persons with the requisite gender (in this case women). The numbered card rule would then be applied as normal. Once the supervisor's daily tallies indicated that a gender balance had been restored to the sample as a whole, enumerators would be instructed to resume pure random sampling by including both men and women on their lists of potential respondents within the household.

Replacement

If there was no one at home in the selected household on the first try, or if the designated respondent was not at home, the enumerator was instructed to make at least two more trips to the household before replacing the household. Note: we replaced households, not respondents.

If the person was not at home after three calls, or if the designated person refused to participate, the enumerator would replace that household with the very next household found in the direction of the walk pattern.

To maintain randomness, replacement rules were strictly enforced.



Back-Checks

After enumerators completed interviews, the supervisor randomly chose one of the completed interviews and returned to the household to check the enumerator's walk pattern and to confirm the accuracy of the enumerator's coding of the respondent's answers for several designated items from the questionnaire.

ENDNOTES

1. Many other persons contributed to this study. Survey data was collected under the direction of C.B. Wiafe-Akenten (CDD), who managed a field staff of five translators, eight survey supervisors and 51 survey enumerators to conduct field work in all ten regions of the country. The field supervisors were Jos Acquah, Adotey Anum, Isaac Appiah, William Kudzi, M.A. Sulley, Evans Oheneba, Loraine Osei-Mensah, and B. Ofosu Yeboah. The data was coded, cleaned and entered into machine-readable format by eight data clerks under the direction of Jennifer Nadeau (AU). Research assistance on questionnaire design, data analysis and report preparation was provided by Kimberly Smiddy Butler and Gina Lambright (MSU). The Principal Investigators are grateful to the National Science Foundation for Grant No. SBR 9727695 and to USAID/Ghana for Award no. 641-G-00-99-00294. The information herein is not official United States Government policy; reference herein to any process or service does not necessarily constitute or imply its endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Government. Any views or opinions are those of the authors alone.
2. The analysis consists simply of selected bivariate cross-tabulations. For example, we search for expected relationships between standard socio-economic characteristics (gender, education residential location etc.) and various political and economic attitudes. We recognize that this form of analysis is necessarily preliminary and incomplete. For ease of presentation, however, no effort is made here to report results from multi-variate analysis in which the effects of predictor variables are "controlled", each one for the other. Such analyses are available on request from the authors.
3. The Afrobarometer is a joint enterprise of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD, Ghana) and Michigan State University (MSU). The countries are: South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Benin, and Nigeria. Information on the Afrobarometer and results from Zambia and South Africa can be obtained from any of the above partner institutions.
4. The percentages do not add up to exactly 100 percent because gender data was not recorded for three respondents.
5. Statistically, region and household size were significantly associated ($\eta^2 = .210$, $\text{sig.} = .000$).
6. Statistically, age and education were significantly associated (Pearson's $r = -.141$, $\text{sig.} = .000$).
7. The relationship between gender and education was both strong and significant (contingency coefficient = .211, $\text{sig.} = .000$).
8. Statistically, education and income were significantly associated (Spearman's $r = .281$, $\text{sig.} = .000$).
9. See Bratton, Michael, Philip Alderfer and Neo Simutanyi, "Political Participation in Zambia, 1991-1996: Trends and Determinants", *MSU Working Papers on Political Reform in Africa*, No. 16 (East Lansing, Center for the Advanced Study of International Development, 1997), p. 13. The research in Zambia was conducted with financial



support from USAID/Zambia under Cooperative Agreement No. 623-0226-A-00-3024-00.

10. Interest and discussion are very strongly intercorrelated (Spearman's $\rho = .758$, $\text{sig.} = .000$).
11. Almost a half (45.9 percent) said that they *sometimes* discuss politics, while only 21.7% reported *often* discussing such issues; over a third (32.4 percent) answered that they *never* discuss politics.
12. Contingency coefficient = .063, approximate $p = .019$.
13. "Study on Democratic Governance in Ghana" in *Observatoire de la Democratie en Afrique* (Cotonou, Benin: GERDDES-Afrique, 1995). IEA found that 30.2 percent of Ghanaians felt that they "did not know enough about what the government was doing". The slight improvement on this indicator between 1995 and 1999 may be interpreted in terms of recent mass political learning or, more likely, a product of measurement error in one or both surveys.
14. Statistically, interest in politics and voter efficacy were significantly associated ($\Gamma = .114$, $\text{sig.} = .000$).
15. The gamma coefficients for the relationships reported in this paragraph were always statistically significant at the .000 level.
16. Contingency coefficient for daily radio and name of V.P. = .443. Contingency coefficient for daily newspaper and name of M.F. = .509. For both relationships, $\text{sig.} = .000$.
17. See Chris McCarty, *Public Opinion in Ghana, 1997* (Washington D.C., International Foundation for Election Systems, 1997). Using an identical questionnaire item, we found only two meaningful differences between IFES's results and our own. First we found fewer "don't knows" (25.6 percent) than IFES (35.0 percent), which we attribute partly to possible mass political learning about the meaning of democracy between 1997 and 1999. We also found fewer persons who mentioned civil liberties (27.8 percent) than in the IFES study (40.0 percent). We attribute this difference to our open-ended response set, which offered respondents a wider range of self-selected meanings.
18. IEA found that 74.0 percent of the population knew that "the president cannot unilaterally make laws", though note that the wording of this question taps knowledge rather than values. IFES found that 92 percent valued honest elections, 89 percent valued free expression, 88 percent valued freedom to form political parties, and 82 percent valued voting choice. The figures represent proportions of respondents saying that these norms were "somewhat important" or "very important" to them in a context where they could also choose to say "not very important" or "not at all important".
19. One quarter of respondents (24.8 percent) gave Ghana's system of government with free elections and multiple parties a score of ten; and well over half (63.1%) of respondents gave the present form of government a score of six or higher.
20. 81.2 percent awarded the previous military regime a score of five or below. Note also that the standard deviation on this item (2.65) was lower than for any other form of government canvassed by this question. Thus, whereas Ghanians were somewhat divided among themselves about the character of colonial rule (3.65), they hewed to a much closer consensus on the undesirability of military rule.



21. Some respondents had difficulty answering this question, claiming that they had no way of knowing what would happen in the future. Many felt that “only God knows” and that one’s preordained fate was beyond the ken of mere mortals. Given Ghana’s history of abrupt and frequent regime changes (see Background section to this report), “don’t know” may actually be a rather rational response.
22. With ten or more years of education.
23. Note: the difference between countries on this identical item could be due to sampling error alone.
24. Due to inaccuracies in national population estimates, including the number of people over the age of 18, the proportion of eligible adults registered as voters is not known. The total number of registered voters in 1996 was 9.3 million.
25. The Election Commission reported 77.9 percent for the general elections and 39.0 percent for the local government elections
26. For signing petitions, contingency coefficient with education = .118, sig. = .000; for writing letters to the editor, coefficient = .192, sig. = .000.
27. Contingency coefficient = .181, sig. = .000.
28. Contingency coefficient = .189, sig. = .000.
29. Note: only 1512 persons answered this question, mostly rural persons who lived in chiefs’ jurisdictions.
30. Eta = .213, sig. = .000.
31. Eta = .196, sig. = .000.
32. Gamma = .338, sig. = .000.
33. By income and saving respectively, eta = .375 and contingency coefficient = .298 (sig. = .000)
34. For both relationships, gamma = .147, sig = .002.
35. Contingency coefficients = .112 and .118 respectively, sigs = .000.
36. E.g. for urban-rural by banks, contingency coefficient = .125, sig. = .000. For education by businesses, contingency coefficient = .130, sig. = .000. This finding is reinforced by the fact that Ghanaians who operate a bank account are no more or less likely than others to “trust banks”.
37. Pearson r = .641, sig. = .000.
38. Gamma = .117, sig. = .000.



39. Contingency coefficient = .100, sig. = .000.
40. Gamma = .074, sig. = .000.
41. Note: the difference between countries on this identical item could be due to sampling error alone.
42. Because many people had not heard of the ERP, enumerators were permitted to rephrase the question to ask about the distributional effects of “government economic policies”. Even so, a significant minority (16.9 percent) could not come up with an answer to this question, which they apparently found perplexing.
43. Note: the difference between countries on this identical item could be due to sampling error alone.
44. Contingency coefficient = .201, sig. = .000.
45. Contingency coefficients = .128 and .127 respectively, sigs. = .000.
46. Pearson’s r = .288, sig. = .000.
47. Pearson’s r = .223, sig. = .000.
48. Pearson’s r = .480, sig. = .000.
49. See Robert Mattes and Hermann Thiel, “Consolidation and Public Opinion in South Africa”, *Journal of Democracy*, 9, 1, 95-110.
50. Pearson’s r = .408, sig. = .000.
51. See Richard Rose and Doh Chull Shin, “Democratization Backwards: The Problem of Third Wave Democracies”, unpublished paper, August 1999; Guillermo O’Donnell, “Democratic Theory and Comparative Politics”, unpublished paper, September 1999.
52. Spearman’s ρ = .496, sig. = .000.
53. Contingency coefficient = .187, sig. = .000.
54. Gamma = -.118, sig. = .000.
55. Contingency coefficient = .105, sig. = .005.
56. Contingency coefficient = .076, sig. = .008.
57. Contingency coefficient = .084, sig. = .003



58. For gender, contingency coefficient = .133, sig = .000; for education, contingency coefficient = .169, sig = .000; for income, contingency coefficient = .173, sig = .000

59. Pearson's $r = .358$, sig. = .000. Note however that, because many Ghanaians were unfamiliar with the ERP, the number of responses in this analysis was relatively small ($n = 719$).

